



BLUE AND GRAY WEEKLY



Stories of Brave Northern and Southern Boys in the Civil War.

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No. 21

NEW YORK, DECEMBER 30, 1904.

Price 5 Cents.

UNDER COURT-MARTIAL; OR, THE BOYS IN BLUE DISGRACED.

By LIEUT HARRY LEE.



"He is a spy and a traitor!" denounced Farwell savagely. Unable to control himself longer, Jack started forward, but was restrained by the guard. "That is false and you know it. Steve Farwell!" he cried.

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(Continued on page 3 of cover.)

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CHAPTER I.

GENERAL GRANT'S PLAN.

The Confederate general, Beauregard, had fought the battle of Shiloh and lost. He had evacuated Corinth perforce and retired to Tupelo.

The great army of the West, now under the command of General Halleck, was in hot pursuit. These Union victories more than offset the Confederate successes in Virginia and shook the structure of the Confederacy to its foundations.

The Confederate Congress at Richmond met in alarm. The matter was fully threshed out, and Jefferson Davis in great anger ordered the removal of Beauregard, declaring that he should never be reinstated.

It was Halleck's purpose to deal the Confederacy such a blow in the West that they would never recover from it. Now that he had secured Corinth he purposed to execute his plan.

This was to detach General Buell to march westward to Chattanooga, Tennessee. He himself marched southward to Mobile, with the purpose of opening the Mississippi on his way.

But General Bragg, of the Confederate army, who had superseded Beauregard, finding that Buell's objective point

was Chattanooga, himself marched thither and seized that point.

As soon as this was done the Union Government decided to recall Halleck to Washington to take charge of the campaign in Virginia.

This removed from the victorious southward-bound army its general and executive head. It was also depleted of its strength.

Buell was compelled to retreat to the Ohio river. It was now possible for the Confederates to undo all that Halleck had gained. Heavily reinforced by conscription, they now planned to do this.

But they were destined to meet an obstacle in the shape of a grim silent man, whose character was one of bull-dog tenacity, and who stood in their path like a mountain of rock. This human barrier to their plans was General U. S. Grant.

After the departure of Halleck, Grant succeeded to the command. He was forced to assume a hard task.

His best troops had been detached to reinforce Buell. He was greatly outnumbered by the troops of Price and Van Dorn, the former being at Iuka and the latter at Holly Springs.

So many troops had been detached from Grant to strengthen Buell that these two Confederate generals believed it possible to attack and capture Corinth.

This was the key to the military possession of Tennessee. Thus matters stood at the opening of our story.

In General Grant's army there was a company of youths hailing from a town in New York known as Fairdale.

They were an independent organization and called themselves the Fairdale Blues. They had been mustered in at Washington, and for a time served in the army of McClellan. But during the period of inactivity of the Army of the Potomac they had applied for a transfer to the Army of the West.

They had fought bravely at Donelson and at Shiloh and had won the high opinion of General Grant.

Jack Clark, the son of Homer Clark, a prominent merchant of Fairdale, was the captain of the Blues.

His first lieutenant was Hal Martin, his second lieutenant Walter Gray. Then other officers worthy of mention were First Sergeant Joe Ward and Corporal Tom Peters.

The Blues had met with many losses necessarily in their long campaign, but Jack had been able to recruit his thinned ranks without any trouble, so that the company was always up to the standard.

When General Halleck detached Buell and his corps the Blues chose to remain with Grant.

Buell's expedition promised plenty of good fighting. But the Blues were much attached to the silent man, who said little but accomplished victories.

It was while Grant was in his most desperate predicament that one day a scout walked into his tent.

The general regarded him with interest.

"Ah, Farwell," he said, "I am glad you have returned. What news have you?"

Steve Farwell, noted as one of the shrewdest of scouts, fixed his keen gaze upon General Grant and replied:

"Price is still at Iuka. But he intends to move within forty-eight hours."

"What move will he make?"

"He will move on Corinth."

General Grant bit savagely at his cigar and glared at Farwell.

"Are you sure of this?"

"I am."

"Do you know any particulars as to his objective point of attack?"

"None save that he will co-operate with Van Dorn."

"Where is Van Dorn now?"

"At Holly Springs."

General Grant puffed at his cigar. He was reflective a moment. Then he turned and studied a military map.

On that map it was easy for him to see that he was between the two hostile forces.

Holly Springs was west of Corinth, while Iuka was to the east. If he was attacked from both sides there would be desperate work to save annihilation.

In an instant Grant's mind was made up.

"Farwell," he asked, "do you know for a fact that Van Dorn has not yet left Holly Springs?"

"I think I can say so, sir. At any rate, you may quickly ascertain by a telegraph message to your advance outpost.

They ought to know the moment that Van Dorn makes a move."

"True," replied General Grant. "We have a military telegraph in that direction. I would have been advised of it if such had been the case. It only assures the possibility of my plan."

"Retreat? You will leave Corinth?"

"Never!"

Farwell respectfully saluted.

"Pardon me, general," he said; "I merely asked, as I knew that your position is a very dangerous one. The enemy greatly outnumber you."

General Grant's jaw was hard set.

"There is a way to offset that," he said. "These combined armies might defeat me. I don't propose to let them combine."

Farwell gave a start. His crafty gaze was fixed intently upon the general.

"You mean to attack?" he asked with a deep breath. "I see your plan."

"Yes," replied the general, "I believe that I can reach Iuka and whip Price and get back before Van Dorn can reach Corinth."

The scout saluted and turned to the tent entrance. Just then an orderly appeared in the entrance.

General Grant had risen from his table, and as the orderly saluted he asked: "Well, what is it?"

"Captain Clark, of the Fairdale Blues, wishes to see you."

"I was just going to send for Captain Clark. Show him in. One moment, Farwell, I want you to meet Clark."

The scout's face and manner had changed. A scowl had appeared on his brow and his eyes glittered like diamonds. But he stood at attention.

Into the tent strode a handsome youth, whose fearless manner and open face would win admiration and confidence anywhere. Captain Clark saluted his general.

"Ah, Clark," said General Grant, "you have come opportunely. I was just about to send for you."

"Indeed," exclaimed Jack. "That is fortunate. I am at your service, General Grant."

"I have a very important mission for you. Upon its success depends the safety of this army."

Jack straightened, and a quick eager light came into his eyes.

"I hope you will believe that I am ready to incur any risk to accomplish it," he said.

"I feel sure of that, Clark," said General Grant. "Farwell here brings me news that Van Dorn and Price meditate a joint attack upon Corinth."

Jack Clark turned with a violent start. He had not seen the scout before. Now he faced him with a singular change of manner.

Contempt and scorn, even loathing was in his looks and manner. He quivered for a moment with the force of his feelings.

The scout, however, was cool and statue-like. Not a muscle of his face quivered and he stood stolid and gazing blankly at the young captain.

Only for a moment, however, did Jack Clark maintain this attitude. Then he turned to General Grant with a bow. "I have already learned that the project was on foot," he said. "One of my scouts brought the news but a few moments since. I came here for the purpose of acquainting you with the fact."

"I have already done so," said Farwell. "General Grant, if I can be of no further service I will go."

General Grant had stood a surprised but keen witness of all. He rejoined curtly:

"You will remain."

The general sat down at his table. He beckoned to Captain Clark to come nearer.

He placed his forefinger on the map.

"Here is Iuka," he said. "General Price is there. Here is Holly Springs. You will find Van Dorn there. Over here is Tuscumbia, where is our own General Rosecrans with nine thousand men. General Ord will advance from the north upon Iuka in conjunction with Rosecrans. Price must be defeated before Van Dorn can effect a junction with him."

Jack Clark nodded. The young captain saw the whole plan clearly enough.

"And you wish me to carry the word to Rosecrans——"

"Yes," replied General Grant. "I want you to march east to the river and descend to Tuscumbia. You will join Rosecrans, and when Price is routed you will return to Corinth."

Jack drew himself up.

"The Blues are ready to start at once," he said. "I promise you to do my best."

But Farwell stepped forward with a peculiar smile upon his face. He saluted and said:

"I am sorry, General Grant, but that plan is impossible."

CHAPTER II.

A NEW ORDER.

General Grant, as well as Jack Clark, turned with surprise.

"What is that?" exclaimed the general. "What do you say, Farwell?"

"I say that the project is beyond the range of feasibility."

For a moment there was silence. Jack Clark was so surprised that he could not speak or act. Then General Grant in his quiet manner asked:

"Will you explain why it is not feasible?"

"Yes, sir," replied the scout. "Every road and trail in that part of the country is held by Price's guerrillas and outposts."

"How can that be? A courier from Rosecrans was here not an hour ago."

"He will be the last," said Farwell. "You may be sure Price has every avenue guarded. I don't believe a messenger could reach Tuscumbia by that route. It is possible that he might by going south. I would not vouch for it."

"Farwell," said General Grant impressively, "I am placing deep reliance in you in this matter. The fate of this army depends upon your word. Is what you say true?"

"Yes, sir."

"I do not believe it."

Jack Clark spoke sharp and clear. His eyes burned with a bright light. He did not look at Farwell, but at General Grant. The scout's face grew dark. Surprise showed in Grant's face.

"This is most astonishing," he said. "There does not seem to be good feeling between you two."

"There is not," said Jack honestly. "I do not believe this man is honest, General Grant. I know his past life too well, I would not accept his word."

Farwell muttered an imprecation and glared at the young captain. For a moment he quivered with passion. Then he turned and saluted General Grant.

"General," he said in an obsequious manner, "I have been outrageously attacked by this irresponsible fellow. What he charges against me is false and is only actuated by motives of jealousy. Send him on this expedition if you choose. But I warn you beforehand that he will fail."

There was a curious significance in Farwell's tone which did not escape Jack. The young captain's nerves were on the alert. The scout walked out of the tent.

For a moment there was a deep silence. General Grant very nonchalantly lit a fresh cigar. He reseated himself and began overhauling his maps.

Jack Clark remained standing. He did not vouchsafe speech until, after a time, General Grant in an abstract way said:

"Clark."

"Yes, general."

"You have acted unwisely."

"I am sorry to hear that, general."

"Nevertheless you have. You should have held your temper. No matter what differences you may have had with Farwell you should have kept cool."

"General——"

"That is enough. You can understand what I mean. I have complete confidence in you. Until now I have had complete faith in him. I shall not, however, abandon my plan to send word to Rosecrans. I shall dispatch you by the northern road to Tuscumbia. At the same time I shall send a courier by the southern route. I have a purpose in view. North of Iuka, on a cross road, there is an outpost which I want you to destroy. It is a menace to our safe advance upon Iuka, with Ord's division, as this post has telegraphic communication with Price. Destroy the wires, capture the outpost and then go on."

"If by any chance word reaches Rosecrans before you get to Tuscumbia, keep right on and join him in his advance upon Iuka. I want you and your company to start within the hour."

"I am under your orders, General Grant," said Jack. "They shall be faithfully carried out."

"Give this packet to Rosecrans," said General Grant, rising and placing a package in Jack's hand. "You are going

on a dangerous mission. There must be no mistake. Much depends, aye, even the safety of this army, upon your success."

Jack bowed low.

"I can only say that I will execute your orders, general."

General Grant did not seem to hear the last words. He turned to an orderly and gave a sharp command.

Jack left the tent and hurried to the headquarters of his own company of Blues. He met Lieutenant Hal Martin.

"Hal," he cried, "call the boys to arms. We are off on an important mission."

"Good," cried Hal with delight. "The boys will be glad to be doing something."

The tap of the drum brought the boys from their tents. It did not take long for them to get ready and fall in in light marching order.

A short while later they were marching out upon the highway which led to Iuka. A few miles out they took a road leading to the north and by which they could make a detour and approach Rosecrans' headquarters from the north.

Also Jack knew that this would enable him to capture the outpost spoken of by General Grant, and also to cut the line of telegraph which connected it with Iuka.

But, after they had been more than an hour on this road, an officer came galloping furiously down the road after them.

He wore the uniform of an orderly. He rode up to Jack Clark and saluted:

"Captain Clark?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," replied Jack.

"General Grant sends you a message."

He handed Jack a dispatch. It was written upon the regulation paper and bore what Jack believed was the signature of the great general. Thus the dispatch read:

"Headquarters at Corinth.

"MY DEAR CLARK: Since you left I have reconsidered my plan. Instead of proceeding to Tuscumbia, you will remain at the outpost I directed you to attack, investing the same. Cut telegraph and wait there for twenty-four hours. Then proceed and join Rosecrans in his attack on Iuka.

"(Signed)

U. S. GRANT."

Jack placed the dispatch in his pocket. He could not feel exactly pleased with its contents. But he saluted the orderly and said:

"You may report to General Grant that his orders will be obeyed."

The orderly wheeled his horse and rode away. Hal Martin, who was naturally curious, now came forward and asked:

"What is up, Jack?"

"A change of plan," he said. "For some reason we are to remain at the outpost twenty-four hours. I can't say that I like the plan. The battle at Iuka will be all over by that time."

Disappointment showed also in Hal's face. He shrugged his shoulders.

"It is Grant's orders."

"Yes."

"Well, it is not ours to question why."

"Very true."

The Blues now marched on. It was long past noon, and Jack had reckoned that by four o'clock they should reach the outpost, which was a small cross-roads place known as Little Sycamore.

Thus far they had seen no signs of a foe. But as they drew nearer the locality of the outpost, suddenly a small troop of gray uniformed men were seen galloping down a cross roads.

"There you are," cried Hal. "They are videttes, and they have got the alarm."

"All right," said Jack with a peculiar gleam in his eyes. "We must go on as fast as we can. Bear off to the south. Take the fields, boys. Hello! there is the telegraph line."

The glistening wires were seen not a quarter of a mile away.

The Blues went ahead at the double-quick, and soon they had reached the nearest telegraph pole. The line was a temporary one, erected for military purposes only, and the wires were strung from branches of trees, as well as poles.

Up one of these trees scrambled one of the Blues with callipers in his hand. The wires were quickly cut.

This done, the Blues turned and deployed, marching north, for they knew that they must soon come upon the foe.

Little Sycamore was nothing more than a hamlet, and the outpost consisted of simply an abandoned house in the centre of the place about which intrenchments were dug.

The Blues outnumbered the defenders of the post. Jack knew, however, that it was necessary to use caution in attacking the outpost, for he had no artillery with which to drive them from their defences.

It was not long before they emerged from the woods and saw the houses of the hamlet before them.

These were scattered, there being wide fields between them. The residents had taken their departure when the Confederate troops had established themselves there.

It was not long before a gun was fired in their front. It was the alarm shot of a picket.

Then the distant roll of a drum was heard, and it was known that their approach had been discovered.

The Blues marched on rapidly, deploying so as to form as long and thin a line as possible.

In this manner they drew within hailing distance of the outpost. Jack now turned to Hal and said:

"Send Peters up there with a flag of truce. Tell them that they must surrender or we shall attack."

The order was obeyed. Peters marched up to within a few yards of the house about which were trenches filled with the Confederates.

Their captain, a slender man with hawk eyes and a pointed beard, came out to answer the truce.

With contempt he made reply:

"We refuse to surrender, and you Yankees can come on and take us if you can."

This was all the reply that Tom could get back, so he

went back and reported. Jack at once gave the order to open fire.

The fight was then on.

The Blues loaded and fired as rapidly as they could, creeping near to the trenches all the while. The Confederate defenders answered it fiercely.

But the Blues, by lying flat behind a rail fence, managed to hold their position with little loss of life. Jack Clark waited for the right opportunity.

Then he gave the word:

"Up, Blues! Charge!"

With a wild cheer the boys sprung up. They were met with a fierce volley, but their thin line hardly felt it. They were so near the enemy's trenches that they were right in upon them before many shots could be fired.

Then the Blues gave a volley and went over the breastwork. The result was short indeed and decisive.

The Confederate defenders threw down their guns and held up their hands in token of surrender. The outpost was captured.

CHAPTER III.

THE SCOUT'S WARNING.

Jack Clark knew well the importance of this victory. With the outpost obliterated and the connecting telegraph wire cut, Price at Iuka could not be forewarned of the approach of General Ord, who was to co-operate with Rosecrans.

But, now that the outpost was captured, the work of the Blues was done, if General Grant's last order was complied with.

For Jack knew well enough that if the Blues lingered here for twenty-four hours, the battle at Iuka would be fought and decided.

It caused the young captain some chafing to reflect upon this.

He was more than eager to press on and join Rosecrans. But he knew that it was wrong to disobey orders.

So he prepared to remain at Little Sycamore the required length of time.

The day had now waned and night was at hand. The prisoners were marched into the big house and placed under guard.

The Blues proceeded to bivouac. Campfires were soon blazing.

Jack had held an interview with the captain of the captured force of Confederates. He was a typical Southerner, high strung and loyal to his cause. Yet he was courteous and exceedingly communicative.

"Captain Payton," said Jack in a polite manner, "the fortunes of war seem against you at present. But you made a valiant defense, and it was humane in you to surrender your force before they were all cut up."

"There was no alternative, Captain Clark," replied Pay-

ton. "Your men came on like fiends. We of the South have learned one thing since Shiloh—you Yankees can fight."

"Yet it is a matter of regret to us that we are fighting against our own kin."

"Our best people deplore that," admitted Payton, "but I see nothing to stop the war now."

"No, it must go on."

"Perhaps, after a great decisive battle is fought, there may be talk of peace."

"Captain Payton, I hope so. But I would like to ask you a question. Is General Price at present at Iuka?"

"He is," replied Payton. "I talked with him by telegraph this morning."

"Is there any intention on his part to join forces with Van Dorn and descend upon Grant?"

Payton gave a start. He looked at Jack shrewdly. Then he replied:

"I may as well tell you the truth. General Grant is practically surrounded. He is in a bad position."

Jack nodded quietly. The information was to him full verification of all that he had heard.

"I wonder if General Price knows that he is threatened by Rosecrans and Ord?"

Payton gave a start. But he smiled confidently.

"Have no fear. General Price knows all the movements of Ord, as well as of Rosecrans. No move made by either can affect him. He is already evacuating Iuka."

Jack Clark gave a violent start.

"What?" he exclaimed. "Price leaving Iuka? It can't be. What of that fine army he had at his back? Why should a small force like Grant's make any difference with him?"

"But your force is not so small. On one side is Rosecrans, with 9,000 men. On the other is Ord, with as many more. In front of him is Grant with his army. General Price may be forgiven for exercising a due amount of caution."

"You are right," agreed Jack. "I can understand why he should evacuate Iuka. It will soon be too hot for him."

"Exactly. There is the whole story. But, while ill fortune seems to be his just now, you will soon see a turn that will surprise you."

Jack turned away and walked back to the shelter, which he had formed in a sort of shed or small building beyond the line of trenches.

Here he intended to spend some time in studying his maps when a startling thing occurred.

A man dressed in the garb of a scout and whose face was like a placid lake stood before him. Jack gave a great start and stepped back.

"Farwell," he exclaimed. "You here?"

"Yes," replied the scout as he smiled, "I am here. I have not forgotten your ungracious treatment of me at General Grant's headquarters. Despite that, though, for the good of the cause, I have come here to do you a favor."

Jack Clark stiffened and regarded the scout coldly:

"To do me a favor?" he repeated.

"Yes."

"I distrust your motives."

"I expect you to. It is characteristic of a man of your disposition."

"What do you mean?"

"That men of your type are ruled by personal prejudice."

"You might deceive me, Steve Farwell, if I did not know you so well. A man who is guilty of your treacherous acts and evil deeds hardly merits confidence."

"See here, Clark, what have I ever done to you?"

"Personally, nothing. But I know that you served a term in prison; that you wronged a friend of mine, Lawrence Mason, back in Fairdale, and caused his ruin. You were a forger and a thief——"

"Sh," hissed the scout. "Say no more. It is all false."

"It is all true."

"Well, true or false, the past has nothing to do with the present. You are going to learn before long that Steve Farwell's friendship is much to you."

"I scorn it. I ask no favor of you. I desire to have nothing to do with you."

The scout's face was black with rage and hatred.

He glared at the young captain fiercely. For some moments his fingers worked convulsively and he quivered as if he meant to do him harm.

But presently his manner changed. A cunning gleam came into his eyes and he softened his voice:

"See here, Clark, we aren't going to quarrel. It won't do. The time is close at hand when you will need my friendship. Mark my words!"

"I do not believe that."

"Well, you shall see."

Jack folded the maps he held and turned to walk away. But Farwell stepped before him.

"Listen," he said impressively, "we will set personal differences aside. I have the service at heart, as well as you, and there is nothing prompts me to give you this warning but my stern duty. I warn you that you are in danger of annihilation here. If you remain here another hour you will incur the risk of defeat or capture."

Jack looked hard at the scout.

"Do you mean that?" he asked.

"I do."

"What have I to fear? From whom may I expect an attack?"

"From General Forrest, whose cavalry is not four miles from here at this moment."

Jack started and his face paled a little. The words and manner of the scout gave him a conviction of the truth. But he made reply:

"It is General Grant's orders that I remain here twenty-four hours. He wants this post held that long."

Farwell's eyes glittered.

"General Grant gave you such an order?"

"Yes."

"I don't believe it."

Jack gave a start and stared at the scout. But he replied contemptuously:

"It don't make any difference whether you believe it or

not. I have the dispatch in my pocket, and I shall obey it in spite of Forrest or anyone else. Very likely that is the motive of General Grant that we shall engage Forrest."

"You engage Forrest?" exclaimed the scout incredulously. "A single company against five thousand cavalymen? Why, you would be wiped out in the twinkling of an eye."

Jack could see the logic of this. In his own mind he marvelled at General Grant's order. But, as he had many times said, it was not for him to reason why.

"It matters not, Farwell," he said decisively, "I have General Grant's order and it must be obeyed."

"Very well," said Farwell with a tinge of sarcasm in his voice. "I don't believe Grant would expect you to stay here and risk annihilation. He would expect you to shift to safer quarters on your own responsibility."

"I must have better evidence of that than mere assumption."

"Then you intend to remain here?"

"I do."

"Very well. I wish you good fortune. But, hear me, Captain Clark, I do not forget your betrayal of me to General Grant. You and I will settle the account some day."

"At any time you please," said Jack fearlessly, as he stepped forward. "Nothing will suit me better."

Farwell glared sullenly at the young captain. Then he turned and strode away into the gloom. Jack drew a deep breath and walked back to his tent.

Hal Martin met him and the young lieutenant gave a start.

"What's the matter, Jack? You look as if you had seen a ghost."

"Hal," said Jack in a low tone, "I have reason to believe that we are threatened by an attack from Forrest and his guerrillas. If so, we shall probably get the worst of it unless we get reinforcements."

"From Forrest," gasped the young lieutenant. "He will eat us up."

"I think he could do so here. This position is hardly the one for us. We must for our own safety make a change."

"I believe you. But where can we go?"

"There is a wooded hill just the other side of the town. I think we had better break camp and move out there. If we can hold out the length of time General Grant requires us to stay here we can, I think, carry out his plan, which I think is really to hold Forrest or some other force in check here."

"It looks to me like a mystery, Jack," said Hal uneasily. "I wish General Grant had not changed that order. I would rather be pushing on to join Rosecrans."

"So would I. But we cannot disobey the order."

"By no means. It shall be as you say. We have our campfires going, but they can be put out."

"I am constrained to do this simply as a measure of safety."

"It shall be done."

It is hardly necessary to state that the Blues were astonished when the order came for them to change their position. But without a word they complied.

Those who carried dog tents quickly folded them and

picked up their effects. The officers' tents and equipage were quickly packed.

Then the Blues, leaving their campfires burning by Jack's orders, marched out of the hamlet.

CHAPTER IV.

THE UNION CAVALRY.

The Blues marched to the wood-crowned hill, which was not more than half a mile distant.

This had precipitous ascent on three sides. It was crowned with a growth of oaks.

It was a position such as a small force could easily hold against a large one. For this reason and no other Jack had chosen it.

In the darkness the Blues quickly chose their position. But Jack forbade the lighting of campfires.

He posted pickets half way down the hill. The Blues were deployed in a line along the feasible ascent of the hill.

This had barely been accomplished when distant shouts were heard. Then the clattering of hoofs followed, and from their high position the Blues beheld a surprising spectacle.

Into the fire-lit street of the hamlet of Little Sycamore, so lately held by the Blues, galloped a legion of cavalry. They seemed to be in overwhelming numbers.

Jack had left the prisoners in the abandoned house. He knew the folly of attempting to take them with him.

He saw them released by Forrest and his followers. Then he saw a skirmish line galloping away out of the place in pursuit.

They galloped past the hill and on down the highway beyond. It seemed odd indeed that they did not ascend the hill.

Very likely it did not occur to them that the Blues would take up a post so near the town. Undoubtedly they believed them miles away in rapid retreat.

So, curiously enough, it happened that the Blues remained silent and safe on the wooded height overlooking Little Sycamore, while Forrest and his guerrillas overran the town and finally went galloping by in the darkness in supposed pursuit of the Blues.

It was as odd an experience as the boys had ever had. They could hardly believe their good fortune.

But, when some time later, the last of Forrest's soldiers had passed, and the Blues could feel safe, it is hardly necessary to say that a deep sense of relief came upon them.

"Well," whispered Hal, "that is what you might call luck, Jack. It is curious that they never thought of looking for us here."

"That is right," agreed Jack, "but we are not out of the woods yet. They may come back."

This was true, as both knew. The Blues slept on their arms on that dark hillside the rest of the night.

When morning came it found Jack Clark still pacing up

and down and keenly on the alert for the foe. He had not slept that night.

He had felt keenly the responsibility of the situation. He swept the country in the early morning light with his field glass.

Jack saw nothing of Forrest or his men. It was likely that they were many miles away.

But far south, in the direction of Iuka, he saw a great cloud of smoke. It seemed as he strained his hearing that he could hear the distant roar of guns. Perhaps the great battle was still in progress.

The effect of this upon Jack Clark can well be imagined. He closed his glass with a sigh.

Just then the clatter of hoofs was heard on the highway below. Looking down, Jack saw that which gave him a start.

The blue uniforms and flashing sabres of a company of Union cavalry appeared in the road. In an instant Jack started down the hill, waving his arms and shouting.

The colonel of cavalry looked up and gave a start. He reined in his horse and halted his men.

He was recognized by Jack as Colonel Fenderson, and the young captain knew that he must be on some scouting trip for Grant.

The colonel saluted and rode up to the rail fence.

"Ah, Captain Clark, what are you doing here?"

"I am holding this position under orders from General Grant."

A look of astonishment appeared on the colonel's face.

"Eh?" he exclaimed. "Under Grant's orders? Aren't you mistaken?"

"No; I have his dispatch here."

For a moment Fenderson looked thunderstruck. Then he dismounted and flung his bridle rein to an aide.

He approached the rail fence and Jack did the same.

"Have you seen Rosecrans?" asked the colonel sharply.

"No."

"What? Have you not delivered to him yet the packet which General Grant gave you?"

A strange misgiving seized Jack. He stared at Fenderson. But his confidence returned and he replied:

"That order was countermanded."

"Countermanded," exclaimed the colonel of cavalry. "By whom?"

"By General Grant himself."

"When?"

"Last night before we were four miles on our way."

"Impossible," said Fenderson with a shrug of the shoulders. "You have made a terrible bull, Clark. It was expected of you to deliver to Rosecrans exact and implicit directions for a concerted attack upon Price with General Ord. Another messenger was dispatched by the southern route to warn Rosecrans, but you had the necessary orders. He must be waiting for you now, for Ord is already up and waiting for the sound of Rosecrans' guns. It means delay which will enable Price perhaps to slip away and the game will be lost. The directions to Rosecrans are in that packet

which you were to deliver to him. Boy, what do you mean? You have blocked the game—you have spoiled all."

For a moment Jack Clark's brain reeled with the force of this terrible accusation. He grew sick and faint with horror.

"But the order was countermanded," he gasped.

"Countermanded by whom?"

"By General Grant."

"Impossible!"

"I tell you it is so. I have the dispatch here. He ordered me to capture this outpost and hold it twenty-four hours before reporting to Rosecrans."

"Where is the order?"

Jack tremblingly drew the dispatch from his bosom. Already a horrible suspicion was upon him.

Fenderson glanced at the dispatch and then at Jack. His face was ghastly and he smiled in a sickly way as he said:

"Clark, I'm sorry for you. That order was never written by General Grant. Any schoolboy ought to have seen at a glance that it is a clumsy forgery."

Jack nearly sank down with a sudden faintness.

"My," he whispered, "a forgery? I have been deceived. I have delayed the move. I should have reported to Rosecrans. All is lost."

It seemed to the boy captain as if the world was turning upside down. But he recovered himself as Fenderson said sternly:

"Come, Clark, this is no time for weakness. You will need to make full explanation to Grant when you see him again."

"But what shall I do? Even at this late hour this order must go forward."

"Yes."

"I will take my horse and carry it to him as fast as horseflesh can take me there."

"Wait. It is better that you should remain with your company. General Ord is already within striking distance of Iuka. I will send a detail of my best riders to Rosecrans with the delayed orders. It is better for you and your company to join Ord if you wish to participate in the attack on Price."

Jack reflected for a moment. He saw that Fenderson was right. It was certainly his best plan.

There would not be time for him to join Rosecrans with the Blues. To take part in the action it was therefore only left him to join Ord.

Jack delivered the delayed orders to Colonel Fenderson. Three minutes later a detail of cavalymen was galloping with them to Rosecrans.

The Blues now formed quickly in line of march. Ord's corps was but a few miles away and about to move on Iuka. By double-quick marching the Blues got up with the column just as it moved forward to the attack.

Nothing was seen of Rosecrans or his corps as the line moved forward. History records that at four that afternoon Rosecrans had, after a great delay, moved up to a point within two miles of Iuka and encountered the Confederates in force.

The result was a severe conflict in which he lost a battery and 730 men.

Had he moved forward earlier and established communication with Ord, as the delayed orders of General Grant provided, he would have cornered Price, and no doubt effected his total destruction.

So it happened that Ord, in pressing upon Iuka from the north, was astonished to meet with no resistance.

He marched unobstructed into the deserted streets of Iuka.

The Confederates had escaped by the road to Fulton, and which Grant had ordered Rosecrans to occupy.

These orders, as we have seen, did not reach Rosecrans, so while he was held in check on one road the Confederates escaped by the other.

Of course, a hot pursuit was organized, but it was of no avail.

Price had escaped from the clever trap set for him and was on his way to join Van Dorn. And the real party responsible for all this was no other than Captain Jack Clark, of the Fairdale Blues.

It was the first time in his life that Jack had failed in the execution of a mission entrusted to him.

In one sense it was not his fault, for the forged order had been the real cause of all the trouble. But in the army a soldier is held responsible in all cases for failure in duty, and only the clearest of evidence can effect his exoneration.

Jack foresaw the breaking of the storm cloud which hung over him. His courage did not desert him, and he was determined to meet the ordeal frankly and fearlessly.

CHAPTER V.

UNDER ARREST.

General Grant was much displeased with the result of the operations about Iuka. He was even impelled to reprimand Rosecrans for non-execution of his orders.

But when that general asserted that he had not received the orders which would have resulted in his occupying the Fulton road, General Grant was astounded.

General Rosecrans reiterated his statement.

"Not until after the action had been fought, and Price had really escaped, did I hear from you," he declared. "Then one of Colonel Fenderson's cavalymen brought me your orders."

"Colonel Fenderson," said Grant, knitting his brows. Just then an orderly entered his tent.

"Captain Jack Clark, of the Fairdale Blues," he said.

General Grant's face grew bright.

"Admit Captain Clark," he said. "He is just the man I want."

Jack Clark, handsome and frank, though a trifle pale, strode into the tent. He saluted both generals.

"Ah, Clark," said General Grant, biting off the end of his cigar. "This is General Rosecrans."

"I am glad to meet Clark," said Rosecrans in his most genial way.

"The pleasure is very great to me," said Jack. "I had hoped to meet you earlier than this, General Rosecrans, but fate conspired to defeat my purpose."

"Now you have come to the point, Clark," said Grant. "And that is what I like. Why did you not deliver those orders to Rosecrans before his advance upon Iuka?"

"General Grant, I will tell you my story, and then you may judge whether I did right or not. With my company I marched to effect the junction with General Rosecrans on the other side of Iuka. But when only four miles on my way I was overtaken by a mounted orderly. He gave me this order from you."

Jack tendered General Grant the forged dispatch. The general took it and read it. He looked it over curiously.

Not a line in his face changed.

"You allowed this to deceive you, Clark? It is a transparent forgery. I thought you knew my handwriting better than this."

Jack's face flushed.

"General, I believed it an order from you. I will admit that it chafed me and my men to comply with it, but, believing it was authentic, I obeyed it."

"If you had scrutinized it you must have seen that it was not genuine."

"I am at fault in that respect."

General Grant turned and placed the forged dispatch on his table. He did not speak for some moments. When he did it was in a curt way.

"Do you know the result of your failure to deliver that dispatch?" he asked.

"I assume that it was serious, sir."

"Yes, it was serious. It resulted in the loss of many lives and the escape of Price and his army. It was a very important mission I entrusted to you, Clark."

"I am heavily conscious of that, sir," said Jack, "but I am entitled to at least some consideration toward leniency in view of the fact that I was deceived."

"I don't think Clark ought to be heavily censured, general," said General Rosecrans. "Much of the blame rests upon me. I should have had the forethought to occupy the Fulton road."

This was exceedingly kind and generous and Jack's face flushed with gratitude. But before General Grant could say more an orderly appeared.

"General Grant," he said, "the scout Farwell is outside and desires to see you upon very urgent business."

"Let him come in," said Grant.

The next moment into the tent strode Farwell. The scout's face was flushed and his eyes glittered.

He looked at Jack furtively and at General Rosecrans. Then he saluted General Grant.

"Well, Farwell," said the general, "what is this important business? Is it of a private nature?"

"Not so private that any here need to retire," said the scout. "In fact, it concerns one person here," and he glanced at Jack.

"Ah," said General Grant in his calm, icy manner, "do you refer to Clark?"

"I do."

"What have you to say?"

"I have to say, sir, that you should put him under arrest at once. He is a dangerous traitor and spy."

Jack Clark was astounded beyond measure. For an instant he was speechless. Then the absurdity of the charge so impressed him that he laughed.

"You are likely to be able to prove that, Farwell," he said. "General Grant is likely to believe. You can see, general, how far personal spite and animosity will carry one of this man's class."

General Grant's inscrutable face never changed. General Rosecrans bent forward with surprise and interest. Farwell folded his arms with a scornful sneer.

"The charge I make will have more weight when I establish it beyond all manner of doubt," he said.

"Are you able to do that?" asked Grant.

"I am, sir."

"Proceed."

"Very well, sir. Last evening I had occasion to pass beyond the picket guard on the Tupelo road. I soon became conscious that some one was preceding me out of curiosity. I saw, despite the darkness, that it was Captain Clark."

"One moment." General Grant turned to Jack. "Were you there at that hour?"

"I was," replied Jack.

"Something prompted me to shadow him and see what his mission was," said Farwell. "I followed him as far as the log bridge over the creek. There he met a Confederate officer in full uniform. They conferred a while——"

"It is a lie!" cried Jack hotly.

General Grant held up his hand.

"Silence," he thundered. "Go on."

Farwell smiled in a sardonic way.

"A scout sees strange things," he said. "If I told all I knew. But to resume, Clark conferred with the Confederate officer in an undertone. The latter gave him a letter, and I saw him place it in the pocket of his blouse. I could have called the guard, but I knew the traitor was safe, so I waited my chance to report to you."

Silence like that of the grave rested for a moment upon the tent as Farwell ceased speaking. Jack was pale and quivering. There was a shade of sympathy on General Rosecrans's face.

General Grant was like a sphinx. He mouthed his cigar carelessly. Then he turned slowly and said:

"Have you got that letter in your blouse now, Clark? If so I would like to look at it."

"I need only say, General Grant," said Jack, "that this fellow's story is too absurd and malicious for belief. I did walk as far as the log bridge, but I did not meet anyone, nor did I receive a letter."

"He has the letter on him, General Grant," said Farwell. "I'll wager it is in the pocket of his blouse."

Instantly Jack threw open his blouse to disprove the

statement. He put his hand in the pocket and drew out—a letter.

For a moment the young captain stared at it in sheer amazement. Then horror crept over him as he saw the insignia of the Confederate headquarters and it dawned upon him that he was the victim of a foul conspiracy.

"Ah, you seem to have found a letter," said General Grant. "Kindly allow me to see it."

Jack handed the letter to General Grant.

"I don't know its contents," he said. "I don't know how it came in my pocket."

General Grant took the letter in his same imperturbable way. He opened it and read it slowly.

It was a confidential epistle from the Confederate General Price, in which there was an allusion to the escape at Iuka and hinted at a possible attack on Corinth. It was directed to Jack Clark.

For some moments General Grant studied the letter. Then he turned to the orderly who was present.

"Call the guard," he said curtly.

Jack Clark was now like a statue of stone. It seemed to him as if nothing mattered now. The worst of all blows had fallen upon him.

He was to be placed under arrest. He and his little company were to be plunged into disgrace.

It might even mean his death warrant. It certainly would if he could not disprove this charge against him.

He knew that it was all the vengeful work of Farwell. How cunningly the villain had enacted it.

"General Grant," he said in a final appeal, "you cannot believe me guilty of this awful charge. You have known me and my boys well. You know that we love the old flag too well to be untrue to it, and if I must die I pray God to let me die in the field as a true soldier, not the victim of a fiendish trumped-up charge like this."

If General Grant was the least impressed by this stirring appeal his face did not show it. General Rosecrans impulsively started up:

"Grant, I don't believe this boy is guilty. There is some mistake."

General Grant did not reply. At that moment the guard entered the tent. Four men and a corporal saluted.

"Corporal," said General Grant, "take this prisoner to the town jail. The military court sits day after to-morrow, and he shall be tried by court-martial then. Clark, I need only say that if you are found innocent I'll hang the scoundrel who has played this game on you. But if you are found guilty you will be shot at twenty paces."

With a motion of his arm the iron commander went back to his table. All knew better than to question his decision. Jack was marched away to the town jail, an impressive building of stone, with heavy barred windows.

Here he was incarcerated in a cell. The future looked dark indeed for him.

The arrest of Captain Jack Clark, of the Fairdale Blues, was a bit of news which spread through the encampment like wildfire.

It was a shock to all. He had legions of friends, and the general expression was a disbelief in his guilt.

Jack's comrades were stricken with horror and sorrow. Not for a moment would they entertain a doubt of their beloved captain.

Some of them formed a committee of protest to wait upon General Grant. That sphinx-like commander heard them silently, and then said:

"He shall have a fair trial. That is all I can do."

There was no appeal. Jack Clark was under court-martial. Hal Martin obtained admittance to his cell and held a long conference with him.

CHAPTER VI.

ON SCOUT DUTY.

"Don't think for a moment, Jack, that the Blues will ever go back on you," said Hal earnestly. "We're going to resurrect evidence to clear you if we have to force it from that Farwell with a rope and noose."

"It is his vengeful work," said Jack. "There is no doubt of that. But he may make a slip at the trial."

"I believe that he will. At any rate, we will hope that he will."

"Hal," said Jack, "you are to be captain of the Blues until I get free again."

"All right, Jack. I never can fill your shoes. But I'll do my best."

"I am sure that will be good enough. Oh, liberty never seemed so dear to me as now. But I say, Hal!"

"Well?"

"Write to my father and mother and explain all to them. Tell them that the charge is false."

"I will do it."

"And there is another—but she will not believe it of me."

"I know," said Hal. "You mean Nell Prentiss?"

"Yes."

"I heard that she had come west in the secret service of the Confederacy. In fact that she is with Bragg's army."

Jack gave a start. His face flushed.

"That is a romance of the past, Hal," he said. "She cannot care for me now. The war killed all that."

But Hal shook his head.

"I don't know about that," he said. "A girl's heart is a thing which once won is seldom lost. The war will end some time, Jack."

"I hope so," said the young captain. "I am weary of it."

Hal took his leave. He knew well the romance of his young captain's life. At school in old Fairdale Jack Clark's warmest friend and chum had been Will Prentiss, the son of Colonel Jeff Prentiss, of Richmond, Virginia. When the war broke out, Will Prentiss and Jack Clark parted.

It was the severing of a great tie. It was imperative that Will should espouse the cause of his own people of the

South. Jack could do nothing but side with the Union. It was a sad parting between these two friends, henceforth to meet as foes.

Will Prentiss had a beautiful sister whom Jack had met on various occasions. Instinctively they were drawn toward each other, and Jack Clark and Nell Prentiss became sweethearts.

But when Jack Clark assumed the captaincy of the Blues, and went to the front, he knew that he had opened a great gulf between him and the girl he loved.

Will Prentiss became captain of the Virginia Grays. Nell Prentiss, like the high-spirited girl she was, served her country in the most effective role of a female spy.

She had done valuable work in Washington and in Virginia, and as Hal had now declared, she had come west on special service.

Hal Martin went back to the camp of the Blues. He found the boys in an exceedingly dejected frame of mind.

But Hal talked to them encouragingly, and raised their spirits as well as he could.

"We must get to work and prove his innocence," he cried; "that is our work."

"The only way to do that is to get hold of that Farwell and force the truth from him," cried Tom Peters. "When I get hold of him I'll take it out of him."

"No," said Hal, "that would do no good. There are other and better ways."

"But the time is short," said the second lieutenant, Walter Gray; "the trial is in two days."

"That is time enough," declared Hal. "All depends upon us."

"Have you any plan?"

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"That letter must have been placed in Jack's pocket by Farwell. Now I remember seeing him sneaking about the camp last night. No doubt he slipped into Jack's tent when nobody was looking."

"I saw him near the tent," cried one of the boys.

"There you are," cried Hal. "We must pick up the evidence piece by piece and we'll get him."

Just then an orderly rode up.

"Is Lieutenant Martin here?" he asked.

"Right here," replied Hal.

"General Grant sends you orders."

Hal took the message and read it:

"SPECIAL SERVICE!

"LIEUTENANT MARTIN:

"You are hereby instructed to take your company and perform scout service for a column which will advance down the Ripley Road. Report to Colonel Dana of the Minnesota Regiment at once.

"Signed U. S. GRANT."

Hal turned to the orderly.

"Report to General Grant that his orders shall be obeyed at once," he said. The orderly saluted and departed.

The Blues quickly fell into line and marched away. Hal soon had reported to Colonel Dana, a peppery little officer, who saluted and said:

"Deploy your men down the Ripley Road. We will follow in column."

"What is the object of the move?" asked Hal, with interest.

"It is believed that Price and Van Dorn mean to concentrate at Ripley. My regiment will make a demonstration toward Ripley, and, if possible, prevent the junction."

Hal saw the point.

"Then we are apt to hit the enemy's column at any moment."

"Exactly! If you do, hold your men in line of skirmish until we can get up."

"All right, Colonel! Your orders shall be carried out."

The Blues at once set out on their march. Once outside the Union works they left Corinth rapidly, and set out down the Ripley Road.

For some miles they marched on without seeing a sign of the enemy. Then suddenly a vidette spied a Confederate uniform and came riding back.

"The enemy are in force over yonder," he declared, pointing to a low-crowned hill. "As near as I can see they are not intrenched, and seem to be only a wing guard."

"Ah!" exclaimed Hal, "that means that we have hit a marching column. Just ride back a mile or two and carry the news to Dana."

"All right, sir."

The vidette galloped away. Hal now deployed his men in line of skirmish. The Blues began to creep forward through the fields.

They fired as they went. The firing was answered and soon became lively. Bullets ripped across the fields like loaden messengers of death.

The Blues had not their young captain with them to infuse them with confidence. But the young lieutenant played his part well.

Not a man flinched. They kept steadily advancing. In fact, it now became apparent that the foe had begun to extend their front.

This meant that reinforcements had been brought up, and that they had deemed the attack of sufficient importance to draw men from their marching column.

It was now in order for Dana to appear with his regiment. This might bring on such a lively fight as to necessitate the halting of the Confederate column.

This would mean the accomplishment of General Grant's purpose, for nothing would have pleased him better than to hold Price's column engaged long enough to enable him to send a column between him and Van Dorn, and so cut him off.

This was much the same game as had been tried at Iuka. It might be that Price's experience there had made him wise.

In any event, the wily Confederate leader refused to take the bait. He proceeded to fall back in a most clever and discreet manner.

The Blues were soon upon the ridge where their late foes had been. On a distant ridge the Confederate sharpshooters were yet at work.

But Price's main column was still marching on toward Ripley. Hal was now in a quandary.

He did not like to go further at once. At least not without very careful reconnaissance, for he feared the jaws of a trap. The country was high to right and left as well as in front.

This meant that a masked battery, or even an infantry ambush could sharply enfilade their lines, and with most deadly effect.

This was a contingency that must be guarded against. Hal had no idea of sacrificing his company.

So he waited and at an available opportunity rode back to confer with Colonel Dana.

The latter officer was at first inclined to be rashly angry.

"My orders to you were to keep right on," he cried. "I am even anxious to engage Price's main column."

"Pardon me, colonel," said Hal. "You are my superior officer. But I venture a little reminder that we could be all engulfed and wiped out between these hills without a struggle. Of what avail would such a sacrifice be?"

Dana doubted, saw Hal's point and that he was right as well. He hesitated a moment, but like all martinets, did not like to admit he was wrong.

"I think I am a better judge of that than you, Lieutenant Martin," he said. "I order you to continue the skirmish. It is the only way to ascertain if an ambush really exists."

"And I must decline to sacrifice my company."

"What?" flashed the peppery colonel, "you refuse to obey my orders? I will report you, sir."

"I shall be pleased to have you," said Hal. "I don't believe General Grant nor President Lincoln wants any repetition of the charge of the Light Brigade in this country. I doubt if a handful of my men would return alive."

"A good soldier is always ready to sacrifice his life for his country," snapped Colonel Dana.

"Very good," said Hal, quietly. "If you seek that sort of glory, go ahead and get it. As for my part, I would rather live to fight another day."

"You are cowards!"

"Perhaps so. Now let us see you set the example and show your bravery."

Dana bit his lip.

"And you refuse to go ahead?"

"I refuse to send my company to certain death," said Hal. "Come here, Colonel Dana, I can prove what I say."

Hal led the peppery little officer out upon a ridge from which a good view of the Grays' position could be had.

Then with a glass it could be seen that Hal was right. On either side could be seen lines of men in gray hiding in the underbrush. A number of cannon also were seen.

The hideous death-trap was apparent. Dana chivered, and turned away.

"You are right, Martin," he admitted. "We must attack from another quarter."

CHAPTER VII.

AN IMPORTANT CAPTURE.

Hal Martin had certainly been clever enough to detect the trap of the foe. He had prevented defeat, and, perhaps, utter destruction.

Dana had much more respect for the young lieutenant. A consultation was now held.

It was decided to move Dana's regiment around to a pass on the right between the two hills. Here, it was believed that a charge over the ridge would take the ambushed foe in flank.

The Blues were to hold their present position as a blind, and keep up a hot fire. The plan was quickly under way.

So the Minnesota Volunteers crept around and reached their presumed point of vantage.

They had nearly gained the ridge before they were discovered. Then with a wild cheer they charged over the height. The Blues, from their point, kept up a hot fire.

Colonel Dana's plan proved a most effective one. The Confederates retreated in great haste. But again the colonel showed his wisdom and refrained from further pursuit.

The main column of Price's army was at hand. It was possible for him to turn and envelop them if they did not keep their distance.

From his position Hal watched the situation closely. It was with much gratification that he saw Dana drive the foe. He saw, however, that the advantage could be only temporary.

While thus studying the situation, the young lieutenant was given a great start. Far away, to the east, he caught a glimpse of the glimmer of steel.

Then along the verge of a wood he saw a line of horsemen. He gave a start, and put a glass to his eyes.

One glance was enough.

It was a large body of Confederate cavalry. As Hal regarded them, he saw that they were coming up in cover of the wood to strike Dana in the rear.

The young lieutenant felt a thrill.

With great coolness he looked about him to make sure that no other move was afoot. Then he knew that all depended upon him and upon prompt action.

It did not take Hal long to decide. He saw that it would hardly be feasible to send a messenger to Dana.

By the time he had got there, the Confederate cavalry would be down upon the regiment of Union infantry. There was another way, and, in fact, the only way.

Hal adopted it instantly.

He sprang forward, with his sword unsheathed, and cried:

"Forward, Blue! By the right flank, march!"

In an instant the little company went forward on the double-quick. Hal led them rapidly down the slope and across a ravine to a lane which led across the ridge.

In five minutes he had completely changed his position.

He was facing the east. The columns of Price were visible far to the south. On the ridge beyond was Dana.

The Confederate cavalry must pass the position held by the Blues. They were coming on at a rapid trot.

Ten minutes more and they would have descended like a thunderbolt upon Dana's rear. Hal Martin smiled grimly and waited.

Nearer came the troop. They could not see the Blues for they were secreted behind a growth of scrub.

Not until the line of cavalry were within one hundred yards of their position did Hal act. Then he sprang up, and cried:

"Give it to them, Blues! Fire!"

The guns of the Blues flashed fire and a volley struck the front line of the squad of cavalry in the lead. The result was exciting.

Into the air plunged the horses. A number of them went down with their riders. These hurled those behind back, and all became inextricable confusion.

Again the Blues poured a volley into the cavalry. The result was that they fell back in confusion.

An attempt was made to return the fire. The cavalry officers tried to rally their men.

But the Blues were so well screened that the fire of the cavalry was not effective. The cavalry retreated, and reformed half a mile away.

Of course Dana now became aware of what a close escape he had suffered, and sent a message to Hal asking him to hold the position and he would send reinforcements.

But this did not become necessary. The foe now changed their plan of advance materially, coming up on the other side of the hill, in Dana's front.

But here they met with a worse repulse. Their ranks were shattered, and they galloped away to a safe distance. Their attack had been a failure, and as they now withdrew, it was assumed that it was by Price's orders.

The wily Confederate general was much disgruntled by this amazing attack on his flank.

He did not want to halt his column and give battle. There was not a large enough force before him to warrant it. But he did detach a couple of regiments, which now advanced against Dana.

The Union colonel, on his part, was by far too shrewd to care to venture an encounter with such superior numbers.

He promptly fell back, sending word to Hal to do the same.

The Confederate regiments came on at the charge. It seemed to be their purpose to sweep the Union troops off the face of the earth.

Whatever Dana's characteristics might have been as a martinet, he was certainly a good officer. He fought his position well, and held the foe off in a most skilful manner.

The Confederates pursued for nearly a mile. They were now some distance from their marching column. Dana's keen eye saw their desire to overtake the Union troops had led to a rash mistake.

His eyes glistened, and he said to Hal:

"Oh, if I only had another regiment to jump in on their flank there, we would cut them off."

"It could be easily done," said Hal. "They have no support that could be summoned quickly."

"Just so. We could corner them before Price could send support."

The Union troops were at the moment falling back up a rise of land beyond the Ripley highway. The Blues were on the right.

From this point quite an extended view could be had. Far in the distance, streaming down the Ripley highway, was the column of Price. Hal turned his glass to the north, in the direction of Corinth.

If General Grant knew the exact state of affairs there was not the least doubt but that he would send reinforcements, even a whole division, to cut Price off.

Hal could not help a peculiar longing that this might happen. He allowed his glass to wander over the intervening region, and suddenly gave a start.

He lowered the glass, and rubbed his eyes. Then he looked again.

What did he see? Was his eyesight to be trusted? Were those blue uniforms coming out from behind that long line of rail-fence?

Yes, it could not be disputed. Union troops—a legion of them—were pouring through gaps in the fence.

They were rapidly forming in companies, and were starting through the valley. If they were to make a bold dash they would place themselves between Price's pursuing regiments and his distant marching columns.

As Hal watched the scene with strange fascination, he was conscious of an impulse to ride down there and lead them. But this was out of the question.

He moved nearer to Colonel Dana.

"Colonel," he said, quietly, "do you see Union troops over yonder?"

The colonel gave a mighty start.

"What?" he gasped. "Union troops?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"Down yonder where you see the line of big sycamores. I think there is a creek there."

Dana nearly reeled from his saddle; an exclamation of joy escaped his lips.

"We've got 'em!" he cried, jubilantly. "Ready, boys! Stand your ground! We'll force them to surrender!"

As if they knew what move to make to cut off the Confederates, the line of blue began to rapidly file through the valley. But scouts in the rear of the Confederate regiment had already given the alarm.

There was seen to be a sudden commotion in the Confederate line. They began to fall back.

Now a distant wild cheer came up from the valley. The Union soldiers had seen them.

Dana instantly dashed out his sword and rode to the head of his regiment.

"Now, boys, we've got 'em between two fires," he shouted. "Give it to 'em! Fix bayonet! Charge!"

With a cheer the Union line started down the slope. The Confederates were now rapidly falling back and trying to get within hailing distance of their main army.

What was done must be done quickly, as Colonel Dana well knew. But the brigade below, for such it was, seemed to understand this as well.

Hal had now recognized a tall officer on a black horse, who was directing the movements of the Union brigade.

"It is General Fulton," he said. "He belongs to McClelland's Division."

But now the battle had grown hot. Cut off effectually, the Confederates had formed a line of defence behind some fallen trees, and here they formed a defensive square.

For some minutes the battle was hot. Twice General Fulton's brigade charged right up to the fallen trees. Heaps of dead and dying covered the ground.

Hal and his Blues, however, were not in the thickest of the fight. They had been held in reserve by Dana, who contented himself with simply holding the enemy's rear.

"Fulton has a heavy brigade there," he said. "He can spare the men better. We might be cut to pieces, and that would allow the foe to escape."

This was logic. So Fulton's men again and again charged the Confederate line. They defended themselves bravely. But the odds were against them.

When their line was finally pierced, and Fulton's men went in upon them with the bayonet, they threw down their arms and surrendered.

Fifteen hundred of the best soldiers of Price's army were thus captured. And the main column of the army was not a mile away.

But the prisoners were quickly filed out and headed toward Corinth. General Fulton consulted with Colonel Dana.

The result was that they decided upon the Blues as the proper bodyguard to escort the prisoners to Corinth.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE NEGRO CABIN.

Hal did not decline the enterprise. He was not at all sorry to have a pretext to return to Corinth.

He was anxious to know how his young captain was getting along. So he detailed his company in squads to march with the prisoners.

Fulton and Dana had decided to co-operate, and further back the march of Price to Ripley.

So the Blues marched back to Corinth with the prisoners. When they arrived there, the captured Confederates were turned over to the provost guard.

Then Hal went to report to General Grant, and deliver him dispatches from Fulton and Dana.

It is hardly necessary to say that General Grant was much pleased with the work of Dana and Fulton.

"That was well done," he said. "You have performed

your part well, Lieutenant Martin. You may go back to your camp, and wait further orders."

Hal withdrew and joined his comrades. Later he paid a visit to Jack at the jail.

The young captain was in a much depressed state of mind. He was, however, pleased to know of the good work done by the Blues.

"I have yet another day to wait before the court-martial, Hal," he said. "It is awful suspense!"

"Don't you care, Jack," said the young lieutenant. "It only gives us so much more time to procure evidence."

"Evidence in my favor does not seem to accumulate fast."

"It will come. I don't believe the court will adjudge you guilty."

Hal took his leave a little later. It was not easy to cheer up the depressed young captain.

Hal with rapid steps made his way back to his tent. The Blues were encamped in the center of the town. They were within easy call of General Grant's headquarters.

The day was at an end.

Shadows of night were falling, and as Hal walked on, he passed other officers, whom he saluted. Suddenly, a tall man, wearing colonel's shoulder-straps, stopped him.

"Lieutenant Martin!"

"Colonel Fenderson!" cried Hal in surprise. "I am glad to see you. We have not met since that affair at Sycamore."

"Yes. I am sorry for Clark."

"He has been deeply wronged, colonel."

"I believe you. That Farwell is a dark scoundrel. I believe the whole thing was trumped up. Mention this to no one, for I ought not to speak of it."

"Ah!"

"I have been named as one of the presiding officers at the court-martial."

"You!" cried Hal with surprise and delight. "Oh, Jack will be glad. He will have one friend in the court."

"He will have more than one. General Fulton is to preside. General Smith is also on the list of officers."

This was certainly good news to Hal. He knew that these were all men of impartial views, and that none of them were unfriendly to Jack.

"Of course," said Colonel Fenderson, "at present Farwell has the best of it. The finding of that letter on Clark's person is very damaging. It will be hard to overcome. But something may turn up. Perhaps Farwell will weaken."

"We will hope for the best."

"By all means."

"In any event, Colonel Fenderson, I am overjoyed that you are to be one of the military court."

"I am pleased to serve, for I want to see justice done, and so far as I am able, it shall be done."

Hal now hurried away to his tent. He entered it to find Tom Peters awaiting him. The fat little corporal was in an excited state of mind.

"Have you been up to see the captain?" he asked.

"I have," replied Hal.

"Was he all right?"

"Yes."

Peters shrugged his shoulders, and drawing nearer, lowered his voice:

"Do you know what plan the boys have made?" he asked.

"No," replied Hal.

"Well, I'll tell you. We've all agreed that if that scoundrel Farwell does not put in an appearance at the hearing the case against the captain will fall flat. Now we are going to see that he don't get there."

Hal was astounded. For a moment he hardly knew what to say. He knew the spirit which impelled the boys to essay this plan.

But he also knew that while the absence of Farwell might rob the court of his direct testimony, it could hardly serve to do Jack much good. In fact, it might, if the facts were discovered, work to his harm.

So he turned and faced the over-zealous and loyal little corporal.

"Tom Peters," he said, "that is one of the worst things you could do."

The corporal showed his surprise.

"Eh!" he exclaimed. "How do you make that out?"

"Just this way. If it was known that Jack's boys had prevented Farwell from giving testimony, it would only serve to convince the court that he was guilty."

Peters gave a start. He had not looked at the matter in this light before. His face changed.

"I never thought of that, Hal," he said. "There is something in that."

"You will admit it?"

"Yes, I will."

"Now you must advise the boys not to interfere with Farwell. Give him plenty of rope; he will hang himself."

Tom scratched his head.

"The boys will be disappointed," he said. "We had a beautiful scheme all laid to kidnap him and hold him a prisoner till the trial was over."

"Well, take my advice, and don't do it."

"I'll talk with the boys. I know they'll see the point."

So the little corporal hastened away. Hal heard no more of the project.

The young lieutenant was busy for some time with his papers. Finally, however, he arose and left the tent.

Camp-fires blazed all about him. The soldiers were busy getting their evening meal.

Hal strolled through the company streets. Here and there he saw familiar faces. He kept on until finally he was out of the encampment and approaching the picket line.

Something impelled him to pass out of the lines. He saluted the guard, and said:

"You know me. I am Lieutenant Martin, of the Fairdale Blues."

"You must have the password to get back," said the guard.

"I haven't got it."

"Go to headquarters and get it then. I am under orders to give it to no one."

"All right," said Hal. "You are right, my man. I will only ask you to call the guard when I return."

"I can do that."

With a laugh Hal passed out. He was soon walking down the Ripley Road. A detachment galloped past him on its return from some mission. He also met a number of soldiers on their way to the encampment.

The night was clear and the air mild. Far to the south against the sky was a dull glare.

Hal knew what it meant.

Hundreds of Confederate camp-fires reflected their blaze in the sky. Price and Van Dorn were concentrating for their attack on Corinth.

The young lieutenant halted by an oak tree which had been riven by a storm. Here he stood, watching the distant sky, for some time.

Suddenly, as he turned his gaze a little to the right, he gave a start. A light gleamed through the foliage, and with a straining of his gaze he saw in the gloom the outlines of a small dwelling, not fifty yards distant.

The light emanated from a window, and taught him that the house was occupied. As this was a rare thing so near the Union lines, he was interested.

Hal walked across the highway, and crossing the field approached the dwelling.

It was a cabin of humble type. Even before he reached the door Hal saw that it was of the kind occupied by negroes.

This explained all. But some impulse prompted him to conduct his investigations further.

He walked boldly up to the door and tapped upon it. There was no answer.

Hal lifted the latch and stepped in. A low room with rafters overhead hung with yellow corn was lighted by a single oil lamp which sat on a rude table.

At first Hal saw no sign of a human being in the place. Then as he stood a moment taking in the scene, a door leading to an inner room opened.

A negro woman of the plantation type stood before him.

"A'right, massa," she said, with a curtsy. "Wha' kin ole Dinah do fo' yo'?"

Hal saw the cheery fire on the old brick hearth, and it seemed to whet his appetite. He knew that these negro women were excellent cooks, and generally had a well-stocked larder.

"Well, Dinah, looking at you makes me hungry," said Hal, with a laugh. "I believe you have got something nice to eat laid away on a shelf somewhere. I'll pay you well, if you'll get me up a good meal."

Dinah held up her black hands.

"Fo' de Lor' sakes, honey!" she cried, "I reckon yo' done came to a po' place fo' dat. But I'se willin' to do mah best. Ah has some rashers ob bacon an' some fresh yams an' co'n-meat. I done make yo' a nice hoe cake, wif sorghum 'lasses to eat wif it. I done had some fine chicken an' possum dis mornin', but dey done gone by dis time."

"Just my luck," cried Hal. "I suppose some other hungry Yankee came in and cleaned you out of eatables?"

"Dat am a fac', sah."

"Oh, well, hoe cakes and the yams and bacon are all right for me," said Hal. "Don't see anything of any Confederate spies hanging around here, do you, Dinah?"

The colored woman gave a great start, and put up her hands in a flustered way.

"Massy, Lordy! Yo' kin bet dey don' come around heah. It am too neah to de Yankee lines. I done reckon dey git cotched right off quick."

"All right, Dinah," laughed Hal. "Where is your good man?"

"Yo' means mah husban'? Oh, he am jes' now takin' care ob hosses fo' de Yankee ossifers up in Corinth. He ain' got no time to come home no mo', an' Dinah, she hab to get along all alone."

"Just so. Well, Dinah, while you are preparing my meal, I'll sit here by the fire and toast my toes."

"A'right, massa. I done hab suffin' fo' yo' right away."

And the black woman hurriedly pulled the rough table up to the fire and placed some cracked but neatly washed crockery upon it.

Soon she had the bacon in slices on a spit, and the yams were roasting in the ashes. The hoe cakes were speedily in process of baking.

The adventure pleased Hal much. After the dull and weary routine of camp life, sleeping on the ground and eating by camp-fires, the lowly cabin with its homely comfort soothed his nerves and made him think of home.

He fell into a retrospective mood, and was studying the coals in the fire, when a surprising thing occurred.

In the doorway of the adjoining room there suddenly appeared an apparition. A young girl, in riding-costume, stood there.

She was of shapely figure and beautiful features. She stood a moment and gazed smilingly at Dinah, who was making all sorts of expostulatory gestures.

CHAPTER IX.

THE GIRL SPY.

"Massy, Lordy! Yo' mus' not let him see yo'. He am a Yankee," hoarsely whispered Dinah. But the young girl laughed in a silvery way, and put up a hand to reassure the black woman.

"Yes; but not all Yankees are dangerous, Dinah," she said, aloud. "I am sure this one is harmless."

Hal bounded to his feet. He turned and stared at the fair speaker in unmitigated surprise.

"Great Caesar!" he ejaculated. "what is this? Why didn't you tell me, Dinah? I am intruding——"

"By no means, Lieutenant Martin. Fate has arranged this meeting."

Then a startled change came over Hal's face. He passed a hand across his eyes and took a step nearer.

"Is it true!" he exclaimed, "or am I dreaming? It is—Nell Prentiss?"

The beautiful Southern girl inclined her head and smiled in a most bewitching way.

"You remember me, Hal! I am a Confederate and you are a Unionist. Ostensibly we are enemies, but genuinely we are friends."

She held out her hand frankly; Hal took it in a dazed way.

"This is a great surprise as well as a pleasure," he said.

"What are you doing here, Nell?"

"I came West—on important business."

"Yes. I recall now that a report reached me that you had been transferred from Virginia."

"You need ask no more, then. It is, in plain language, the work of a spy that I am engaged in."

"And you dare come here—almost within our lines?"

"Pshaw! I have been within your lines all day."

Hal stared at her.

"You—are in great danger," he said. "You may get arrested. You know the fate of a spy. General Grant is in a very stern mood nowadays."

"That does not frighten me; I am not easily trapped, Hal. I do not fear you, for I know you would not betray me."

Hal hesitated. He knew that there was a price on this brave and daring young female spy. He knew his duty well as a Union officer.

"I don't know, Nell," he said. "If I was to observe my duty——"

"Duty yields to commonsense and discretion," she said.

"What do you mean?"

"If you must know, then I will tell you that instead of my being in your power you are in mine. I have a score of armed men in call. I could summon them and make a prisoner of you in a twinkling. We are close to the Union lines, but we have a system of safeguards that cannot be defeated."

Hal drew a deep breath. He gazed at the young girl with admiration.

"The same Nell Prentiss," he said, "full of spirit and pluck and resource. I surrender at discretion, for I know you will do me no harm, no more than I would you."

She smiled, and drew a seat to the fire.

"It is foolish in us to quarrel," she said. "We will suspend hostilities long enough for a pleasant discussion of the happy past."

"Nothing could give me greater pleasure," said Hal. "What news of your brother?"

"My brother is still captain of the Virginia Grays, and fighting with Lee and Jackson."

"He is a brave fellow. It is a pity that he is such a rebel."

"Like myself."

"Yes, like you."

Then they laughed. But Nell's face grew suddenly serious. She leaned forward a trifle.

"But what of your brave young captain? What of—Jack?"

Hal looked into her eyes a moment, and then said:

"Nell, we hope to save him. He is at present under a terrible cloud. But I want you to believe me when I tell you that he is innocent."

"Innocent!" she exclaimed, tensely, "you need not tell me that. Jack Clark is incapable of a treacherous deed!"

"You never spoke a greater truth, Nell; and if he knew that you had that opinion, I think he would go to his death with a happy heart."

"I heard about his troubles. Let me have the particulars. It is the charge of this scout, Farwell?"

"Yes."

"He is the traitor and the spy. He visits General Bragg regularly with valuable information about the Union forces."

Hal's eyes flashed.

"Oh, Nell! If I could only get evidence of that, I'd put him under arrest at once. That fact alone would clear Jack."

"Yes, it would. I can prove it—but I am a spy myself."

"That is too bad."

"I cannot venture into your military court to testify against him. I would lose my liberty."

"But—the life of Jack Clark——"

"I have thought of that," she said, tensely. "I shall not fail in an hour of need. But I think there is another way; you can do it. But—you must work. The time is short."

"What do you mean?"

"This letter which Farwell used to convict Jack was from General Price, was it not?"

"Yes."

"Now General Price is a man of honor and of high sense of justice. I will go to him at once. He shall send a deputy with a sworn statement that he never wrote the letter—that Jack Clark is not a spy. Also his own absolute declaration that Farwell is a traitor to both sides. A treacherous go-between, as it were."

Hal Martin gave a gasping cry of joy. Like a flash he saw the glorious possibility of this evidence.

The sworn testimony of General Price submitted to General Grant would have powerful weight. The exposure of Farwell would bring him well-deserved punishment. The case would fall, Jack Clark would be absolutely cleared and honorably acquitted.

"Nell," said Hal, with a full voice, "God will reward you for this. It is the only way to save him."

Nell arose, and her voice was clear and decisive.

"Then there is no time to lose," she said. "I ride to General Price's headquarters to-night. I will lay the matter before him. I will return before morning. You will meet me here at daybreak."

"I will."

"Then it is settled." She arose and went into the side-

room. Dinah, who had been busy with the supper, flew after her.

"Wha' yo' gwine, missy? Yo' ain' gwine away to leave ole Dinah, is yo'?"

"I will return, Dinah," said the girl spy, as she emerged with hat and riding-whip. "Remember, Lieutenant Martin, at this cabin, to-morrow morning."

"I will be here," said Hal.

He started to accompany her, but at the door she restrained him.

"No, you must remain here," she said.

"But you—alone and at night—you need an escort."

"I have such, and a faithful one," she declared. "Have no fear. All is well. I am well protected. Good-night."

The door closed behind her. A few minutes later Hal heard the clatter of hoofs and a shrill whistle. Then he turned with a deep breath to the fire.

"Yo' hoe cakes am all ready, Massa Leftenant," the negress said. "I done reckon yo' needn't hab to——"

The sentence was never finished. Dinah stopped with hands uplifted and a face expressive of horror.

Upon the night air outside there had arisen the sounds of a conflict. Loud shouts, the clatter of horses' hoofs, the ring of steel and the crack of firearms told of its desperate character.

Hal stood a moment dumbfounded. Then he grasped his sword from the table where he had laid it, and started for the door.

He flung it open, only to start back with amazement. Into the cabin sprang a sergeant and a file of men.

"Surrender!" cried the sergeant, presenting his sword at Hal's breast. "You are a prisoner. Yield or die!"

So astounded was the young lieutenant that for a moment he stared at the petty officer. Then his face flushed with anger.

"What nonsense is this?" he demanded. "I outrank you, sir. Put up your sword or I will have you put under arrest."

"I think not, Lieutenant Martin," said the sergeant, whose name was Pollock. "We are here with orders to arrest you."

"Arrest me?"

"Yes."

"What fool game is this? On what charge do you arrest me?"

"On the charge of being a traitor and a spy."

"Nonsense! You have no evidence. Why, it is preposterous! I shall——"

"It is all straight," said a voice behind the sergeant. "Hold your man, Pollock! You are responsible! Don't let him bluff you."

It was Farwell, the scout. He stood before Hal with an air of triumph and a mocking smile upon his lips.

Hal's face flushed fiery red. He took a step forward.

"You! this is your dirty work!" he cried. "You dare to accuse me?"

"I most certainly do."

"You are a fool. It is you who are the spy and traitor, and I can prove it."

Farwell nodded sneeringly.

"You will soon have a chance to do so," he said, "in company with your mate and fellow-conspirator. Murder will out, and you are caught red-handed!"

"What do you mean, you scoundrel?"

"Why, is it possible that I must remind you?" said Farwell, jeeringly. "You leave your tent at nine forty by the clock. You walk beyond the picket-line. You gaze at the stars and incidentally look about to see that the coast is clear. In your opinion it is. At ten o'clock you enter this cabin. At ten fifteen you are in earnest consultation with Nell Prentiss, the notorious Richmond female spy, whom our authorities have been searching for for months. Fortunately, owing to my clever foresight, she is at present ours, and you, as well, are found out at last."

With a fearful wave of horror Hal saw that he was trapped. He saw how fate had conspired against him. He was, to all appearances, lost.

He saw how difficult it would be to make a military court believe his story. Caught in consultation with a Confederate spy was prima facie evidence of guilt. It did not seem possible to controvert it.

But he kept his nerve. He knew that it was necessary to do so. For some moments he looked piercingly at Farwell.

"You human sleuth-hound!" he said, tensely, "you know it is not true. It is a game of revenge. But you will fail; you will be beaten yet. I will put the noose about your neck! It will never be put about mine!"

CHAPTER X.

BEHIND BARS.

Farwell laughed scornfully.

"Save your breath," he said, "you will have need of it yet. There is no power on earth can save you. I advise you to iron him, sergeant. He is a desperate one."

"You hound!" gritted Hal.

But Farwell only laughed again mockingly. Heavy iron shackles were placed on Hal's wrists. Then he was led from the cabin.

Aunt Dinah, too terrified for anything, had not been in evidence. She had crouched in terror in a corner of her cabin.

Outside, on the turf, lay several dead bodies. These were members of the bodyguard of Nell Prentiss.

Down in the highway Nell herself was sitting on her horse, held by a couple of men. Her escort, or the survivors who had surrendered, were on foot in line and under guard.

It was a fortunate coup, and it was Farwell who could claim the credit for it.

The scout was in high feather. The game was his, as he

wholly believed. His hatred for Jack Clark and his Blues seemed very likely to find compensation.

Between the lines of the heavy Union guard the prisoners were marched into camp. When they reached the center of the town a guard took charge of the Confederate troops. The girl spy and Hal Martin, with Farwell leading the way, were taken to General Grant's tent.

The general was astir even at that hour. He looked up with surprise. At sight of Nell he arose.

"What's this, Farwell?" he demanded; "what have you got here?"

Farwell bowed obsequiously.

"You can see for yourself, general," he declared. "You certainly must know her. You have offered rewards enough," and he indicated Nell.

The great general looked at Nell critically. As he did so an incredulous light shone in his eyes.

"What is this, Farwell?" he demanded. "Who is this woman?"

"She is Nell Prentiss, the spy!"

"Nell Prentiss?" General Grant showed excitement, which was a rare thing with him. He looked searchingly at the young girl. Then he stepped forward.

"Are you Nell Prentiss?" he asked.

"I am," replied Nell.

"Well, I suppose you realize that you are in the hands of the enemy. So long as you show your loyalty, however, you need have no fear. But can you prove it?"

"I am loyal only to the Confederacy."

"Then you admit that you are a spy?"

"I do."

General Grant puffed at his cigar. He looked critically at the young girl.

"I am quite surprised," he said. "You appear to be a young woman of the upper class. It is hard to understand why you have descended to such an occupation."

"I am serving my country; my life belongs to her."

"That is foolish sentiment, Miss Prentiss; your deeds are known to every army officer in the United States. They have been such that we have been compelled to put a premium on your capture."

"That is of little interest to me," said Nell, coolly. "Hang me, if you will. But I would like to intercede for this young officer with me, who is entirely innocent of any complicity or wrongdoing."

General Grant turned his gaze upon Hal for the first time. He gave a great start, and gasped:

"What! you, Martin?"

Hal could not answer for a moment. Finally, however, he said:

"General Grant, you cannot believe me guilty of any act of treachery against our people?"

"Let me see," said Grant, slowly. "You visited the negro cabin on the Ripley Road, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"You met this young woman there?" and General Grant looked at Farwell. The spy had told him all in a few brief asides.

"I did," said Hal, "but it was an unpremeditated thing. I did not know she was there."

"Yet you became acquainted with her, and made conversation with her?"

"I have always been acquainted with her, general. She was a schoolmate of mine, as well as of Captain Clark. When I heard my voice she knew me, and came out to speak to me. We called a truce and held conversation."

General Grant knit his brows.

"What was the subject of your conversation?"

"Jack Clark."

The general gave a start.

"Why did you discuss him?"

"Because he and his imprisonment was the subject nearest our hearts. We talked of nothing else."

"And you planned his rescue?"

"We planned a way to furnish evidence of his innocence."

Again General Grant knit his brows.

"What method did you design using to secure his release?"

"Evidence of his innocence. This was to be afforded by obtaining the sworn statement of the Confederate General Price, that he never corresponded with Jack Clark, and that the letter found on his person was never written by Price and was a forgery, thereby proving a conspiracy against Captain Clark. This, Miss Prentiss was to do."

General Grant's eyes kindled with interest. But he was as calm and stoical as ever.

"Do you think you could procure such a statement from General Price?"

"Yes," cried Hal, eagerly. "Miss Prentiss can secure it."

"But how are we to know that it is not simply a device to set Captain Clark free?"

"General Price knows nothing of Jack Clark's arrest. He would not be interested. Moreover, he is a man of a high sense of honor, and would give nothing but the truth."

Hal's argument somehow did not seem to him as strong as it had when first discussed by Nell and himself. It did not seem to have the effect on General Grant he had expected.

General Grant now turned to Nell, and asked:

"Do you corroborate all that you have heard Lieutenant Martin say?"

"I do," replied Nell.

"Can you tell me why Farwell, one of our most trusted scouts, should seek to prefer false charges against Captain Clark? Do you know the real motive?"

"No," replied Nell. "I simply know that they are not friends."

"Well," said General Grant, sternly, "I am compelled to hold you both under guard. I shall expect Lieutenant Martin to tell his story before the court to-morrow. They will fit it carefully. I shall expect the truth to come out then. The innocent shall be spared, but the guilty shall suffer."

As he spoke the last words General Grant looked keenly

at Farwell. But the scout's face fairly beamed with evil exultation, and he did not seem to notice the significance which his remarks might possibly have had.

There was nothing more to be said or done. Hal and Nell were marched away to the jail where Jack was imprisoned. They were given cells near him, and the young captain was indeed thrilled with surprise and interest to know that the young girl he loved was an inmate of the same prison.

By raising their voices a little they could talk with each other. Jack had a pleasant conversation with Nell. Then the feasibility of the plan to clear Jack was freely discussed.

Nell seemed to be very confident of its success.

"I tell you, an affidavit from General Price showing Farwell up in his true light will have great weight with General Grant. To be sure, he may not liberate me, for I am a spy. But he will set you free."

"If he does, my first work will be to get your freedom for you," said Jack. Nell blushed deeply, and replied:

"That is very good of you, Jack, but I fear you will find it a hard task. I am not afraid to die. But they won't hang me. They'll only doom me to a life imprisonment. That is, by some, regarded as worse than death."

"That shall never be!" cried Jack, forcibly. "I know I could secure your parole."

But Nell made no reply.

"That I will never give. If I gain my liberty I will serve the Confederacy so long as it exists!"

Jack could say no more. A strange sense of the unattainable came over him. He saw that he could not as yet bridge the great gulf between them.

It was not long before there was a commotion in the jail corridor.

An excited and familiar voice was heard:

"I don't care a hang whose orders they are! I tell you it is an outrage! Grant, or Lincoln, or whoever has done this thing is in the wrong! Why everybody knows Jack Clark is no traitor! Haven't the Blues fought as well as any other company of soldiers in this campaign? I am going to see my captain if I have to tear this jail down. And you've got our lieutenant, too! Ah, yes! it's justice you say! Take the word of that sneak and liar, Farwell, will you? It's a pretty way to treat the best fighters you've got in your whole army. I'm going to see Grant myself, and if he don't set our captain free, you bet the Blues will never shoulder another musket for the Union!"

Then storming down the corridor came Tom Peters. The little corporal was in an excited frame of mind indeed.

His fat sides were shaking and his eyes were dimmed with anger and scorn. When he saw Jack behind the bars he stopped short and began to blubber like a child.

CHAPTER XL.

ON A DESPERATE MISSION.

This exhibition on the corporal's part should not be taken for weakness. It was an evidence of his strongly sympathetic and loyal nature.

It touched his kindly heart to see his much-beloved captain behind the prison bars. For some moments the tears streamed down his cheeks, and he tried to conquer his feelings.

Jack spoke in a quiet way to him.

"I'm glad to see you, Tom. Don't you fear! I'm not going to stay here long. We'll soon be out chasing the Confederates again."

"But they've no right to put you here," cried Peters. "I feel like turning rebel myself."

"I think General Grant had no alternative, Tom. The charge was made and seemed to be substantiated. It was necessary to go through the regular form of martial law. It will be better for me, for I shall be then absolutely cleared of the charge."

"But—that Farwell ought to be hanged!"

"Don't be afraid. He'll hang himself before he gets through."

"I hope he will."

"So you really believe you will soon be out of here?"

"I do."

"Well," said Tom, with a breath of relief, "the boys all sent their good wishes. Not one of 'em will shoulder a musket again till you are set free."

"Now, Tom, that does not please me."

"Why?"

"A very good reason. That is not the right course to take. While my arrest and that of Hal may be an act of injustice, little is to be gained by playing the part of the off-horse. It is better to keep right along and do your part. Let Lieutenant Gray take my place. Joe Ward can be first lieutenant, and you can be second lieutenant, until Hal and I get out. If General Grant wants you for scout duty, I want you to go just the same as if we were with you. Do your best, which I know will be good enough."

"But—we haven't any heart without you and our lieutenant."

"Still you wish to please me?"

"Yes."

"Then you will do as I say."

The fat little corporal saluted.

"Those are your orders, captain?"

"They are, corporal."

"They shall be obeyed."

"That gives me much pleasure."

"Shall we be admitted to the court-martial, captain?" he asked.

"I don't think so," replied Jack. "That is usually held behind closed doors. But have no fear. We have its members on our side. We shall have fair play."

"All right, captain. I feel better. I will go back and report to the boys."

"Good! I wish you good luck."

Peters turned to go, but just then Nell called from her cell.

"Can I speak with your corporal, Jack?"

"Certainly," replied Jack. "Tom, this is Miss Prentiss. Any favor you can do her will be appreciated by me."

Peters advanced to the bars of Nell's cell. The young girl held out a note which she had just pencilled.

"Corporal," she said, "I wish you would follow my instructions in this matter. I think it will save your captain's life and defeat Farwell."

"All right, miss," said Peters. "The captain has told me to obey your orders."

"Would you dare take the enclosed pass, which belongs to me, and enter the Confederate lines?"

Peters glanced at the pass. He saw that it was in regular form and signed by General Bragg. It was sweeping in its character, and requested all guards at any time to pass the bearer "within the lines."

"Why, yes, miss, if it is for the sake of Captain Clark," said Tom.

"Very good! This note which I have written is for General Price. He will understand it when he reads it. Knowing that the life of an innocent man is at stake he will answer it. You need only take the pass. Discard your uniform and go in civilian's clothes."

The young corporal caught the idea at once.

"And this will save Captain Clark?"

"I believe it will. It is intended to prove, by General Price, that Farwell forged the letter found on Captain Clark; that Price never wrote it. This will satisfy the military court that Clark is an innocent man. It will also prove Farwell guilty of a conspiracy."

Tom placed the note and the pass carefully in his shoe. He saluted the fair female spy, and said:

"God bless you, miss! You may belong to the Confederates, but your heart is in the right place. I'll take this message to General Price."

The young corporal now left the jail. He went back at once to the camp of the Blues. Ten minutes later, in the clothes of a civilian, he left the Union camp.

There was much interest in the Union encampment over the court-martial of Jack Clark, and his young lieutenant, of the Blues.

Their reputation was of the best, and there was little division of opinion, which was to the effect that they were not guilty.

Sympathy was wholly with the two young officers.

Farwell strutted about the encampment making insinuations to which few listened with credulity. The fellow was so grossly ignorant, that he could not see that his assertions were not received in the best of faith.

In the meantime matters were in a state of statu quo between the two armies. General Grant hastened work on his fortifications above Corinth.

He had called General Rosecrank in to take command.

He intended himself to retire to Jackson, some miles above, across the border into Tennessee, where some thousands of raw troops were waiting to be drilled and put into shape for action.

Price and Van Dorn had succeeded in concentrating at Ripley. They now menaced Corinth. But Rosecrank in command there was ready for them.

So that on this eve of a great battle, the Union soldiers

had time to feel interest in the court-martial of Jack Clark and Hal Martin.

Tom Peters had been gone a long time on his mission to Price. In reality he had embarked upon an enterprise which involved him in some thrilling adventures.

When Tom left Corinth he took a road which he believed would lead him in a few hours to Ripley. He was on foot, deeming this the safest way to travel.

Down the highway he went at a rapid pace. The day was drawing to a close. Tom knew that the military court-martial would convene the next day at ten o'clock.

This did not give him any too much latitude.

It would be necessary to push ahead with all speed. He would not reach the Confederate lines till long after dark. Counting upon possible delays he would not be back before daylight.

As Corinth grew more distant and Tom became aware that he was going into the enemy's country, an instinctive sense of caution seized him.

In spite of Bragg's pass, which ought not to be questioned anywhere, he was disposed to be on the alert.

He met a number of troops of Union scouts. They passed him by without notice. But after a time the highway began to wind down toward Ripley.

Then in the distance he saw the gleam of a camp-fire. He drew near, and in the dusk saw a number of Confederates gathered about it.

It was a small outpost, and its discovery taught him that others were not far away. The Confederate outer line of pickets could not be far distant.

Tom stealthily crept past the camp-fire and kept on. A half mile further on he heard the tramp of horses' feet.

He sank down in the deep grass behind the roadside fence. A cavalry patrol passed him. They were Confederates.

He could not now be far from the Confederate line of pickets. He was not surprised therefore when from the darkness came the hail:

"Halt! Who goes there?"

"A friend," replied Tom.

"Advance, friend, and give the countersign!"

Tom walked nearer. The form of the picket was outlined against the night sky. His bayonet was toward Tom.

"Halt!" said the picket, threateningly. "What is the password?"

"I don't know it."

"Then you can't pass here, stranger. Be off, or I'll call the guard, right smart, and have you arrested."

"Oh, ye, I can, pard," said Tom, imitating the Southern twang, "I can show you a pass from General Bragg."

"This here is General Price's division. We 'uns don't know nor keer for Bragg."

"You 'uns are subordinate to Bragg," retorted Tom. "If you don't let me through I'll have you shot."

The picket sneered angrily:

"Who be you, anyway?"

"I'm on important business, and I've got to see General

Price at once. It's your business to call out the guard and see if I'm telling the truth."

The picket, who seemed to be a greenhorn, realized suddenly that this was a fact. So he said:

"All right, stranger. That's the best way to settle it."

So he blew a shrill whistle, which was to call the guard. The tramp of feet was heard, and the glimmer of a lantern broke the gloom.

A corporal and four privates appeared on the scene.

"What's the matter, number eight?" asked the corporal.

"What do ye want?"

"Here's a chap that wants to see Price," said the picket.

"You can talk with him. He ain't got no password!"

The corporal held up his lantern and scrutinized Tom's face.

"He looks like a durned Yankee!" he said. "What do ye want?"

"I want to see General Price," said Tom. "Every minute I'm delayed is a damage to you 'uns. Take me up to the general's tent to onct!"

"Humph! What's your business with the general?"

"That's none of your business! Hang you! kin you keep me here when I've got General Bragg's order admitting me to the lines anywhere?"

"Where's yer order?"

Tom held the pass out. The corporal took it and scrutinized it. Tom could not help a smile when he saw that the fellow held it upside down.

Evidently he was illiterate and could not read. He grunted, and said:

"Humph! 'tain't regular!"

Tom's heart went down like a lump of lead. For an instant it seemed to him that he must fail in his plans, and all owing to the perverse ignorance of this man.

CHAPTER XII.

JUST IN TIME.

The young corporal's gorge began to rise. It angered him to be thus browbeaten by an ignorant brute.

"I'll thank ye fer that pass," he said. "I'll have you reported and suspended for incompetency. You can't read it!"

"Hey! I kin read a heap more of it than you kin," sniffed the corporal. "Don't you insult me, or I'll run ye into the guardhouse."

"Will you?" snapped Tom. "It will be the worst thing you ever did! I am on important business. I have valuable information for General Price, and you must not delay me!"

Forgetting himself, Tom had dropped his accent and vernacular. It was instantly noted by the corporal.

"Durn me, but I believe you're a confounded Yankee," he cried, flashing the lantern again in Tom's face. "You talk like one. Jest as like's not you're a spy."

"Are you going to give me that pass? You have no right to keep it!"

"It ain't regular, and I shall keep it," said the corporal. "What's more, I put you under arrest. Fall in, men, an' we'll take him to ther guardhouse!"

If ever Tom Peters was mad, it was at that moment. The insufferable ignorance of the fellow maddened him.

"You contemptible ass!" he cried, "don't you know anything? Call your colonel! You've no right to commit me to the guardhouse. Take me to your provost-marshal, then!"

"I'll put ye where ye'll be safe till mornin'," said the corporal, "then I'll deliver ye over to the provost-guard!"

"But, you fool!" shrieked Tom, "it will be too late, then! Listen, it is to save an innocent man's life that I am here. You must allow me to see General Price. Call some other officer. Call your captain, your colonel, or anybody who is educated."

"I'm educated enough to put you where you belong," sniffed the fellow. "You're a durned Yankee, that's what you are."

So in spite of all protests, Tom was ignominiously hustled away in the darkness until they arrived at a small cabin, in front of which paced a sentry. Into this cabin the young Union corporal was thrust—and minus his pass.

There he was left to reflect upon his position; and as he did so, he grew madder every moment.

It occurred to him to make one more appeal, and in corroboration of his story to show the letter of Nell Prentiss to Price. But he suddenly remembered the inability of the officious corporal to read, and that it was more than likely that the letter would be seized as well.

So he refrained. There was absolutely no recourse.

Tom was compelled to remain in the cabin. A feeling of horror and of impotency seized him.

He thought of his young captain in the Corinth jail, and of the necessity of procuring the letter from General Price that would clear him.

All depended upon him.

And he was kicking his heels in the Confederate guardhouse waiting for morning to come, when, even if he should see General Price, it might be too late.

It is hard to describe adequately the emotions of the faithful little corporal. All sorts of daring and desperate plans entered his brain.

He even thought of breaking out of the cabin. But he soon found that the windows were barred with iron and he could not force them.

He tried to appeal to the sentry in front of the cabin.

But even this did not work. He would pay no heed to his calls, striding up and down with his gun over his shoulder in stoical silence.

The long hours wore away, and as day began to break, Tom grew sick with dismay and hopelessness.

But, at the eleventh hour, as it were, and just as hope was deserting him, an incident occurred which changed the complexion of things.

The tramp of horses' feet sounded, and Tom heard the hail of the picket:

"Halt! Who goes there?"

"A friend!" was the sharp reply.

"Give the countersign."

"Davis and the Confederacy."

"Pass in."

Then up from the picket line came a troop of horse. Tom, through the grating of the cabin-window, could see them plainly.

He saw the fine-looking young Confederate officer in front, who rode up to within a few yards of the cabin.

Then Tom seized his opportunity, and shouted:

"Captain, give me help! I am confined here by the ignorance of the corporal's guard. I have an important message for General Price. It is to save an innocent man's life! For heaven's sake! don't ignore my appeal!"

The young Confederate officer turned in his saddle and stared at the cabin. He was about to spur away, but hesitated.

"Whom have you there, guard?" he asked, sharply. "Is the man drunk?"

"No, no! I am not drunk!" shouted Tom. "I must be taken to General Price. I have a message for him from Nell Prentiss, the spy!"

At the sound of Nell's name, the young officer wheeled his horse. A startled expression came into his eyes.

"What's that?" he cried. "I know Nell Prentiss well. I am a Virginian myself."

"Yes, yes!" cried Tom. "I have a message from her for General Price. This thick-headed corporal, who can neither read nor write, confiscated my pass and locked me up here."

In an instant the young cavalry captain held up his hand:

"Send for the guard," he said. "Let us see about this."

The sentry blew his whistle. In a few moments the corporal and his men appeared. He faced the young captain and respectfully saluted.

"At your service, captain."

"Who is this prisoner, corporal?"

"He's a durned Yankee spy, sir. He was trying to get through the lines, and I locked him up."

"Oh, he's a spy, eh?"

"That's a lie!" shouted Tom. "I had a pass from General Bragg, and he confiscated it."

The cavalry captain said sternly:

"Is that true, corporal? Did he have a pass?"

"Yes."

"Where is it?"

"I took it up, captain."

"Why did you do that?"

"Bekase it warn't regular."

"Let me see it!"

The corporal fumbled in his blouse and drew out the

pass. The young captain glanced at it, and his brow grew dark.

"Why, this pass is authentic," he said. "Didn't you read it, corporal?"

"Y—yes!" stammered the corporal.

"It's a lie!" cried Tom, hotly. "Ask him to read it! He can't do it! Captain, I have been delayed here five hours by the pig-headed foolishness of this corporal!"

"So it seems," said the captain. "Open that cabin door and let the prisoner out. Corporal, never repeat this act. In all cases take the prisoner to the colonel before you commit him. This may be a serious matter for you."

The corporal grew white and scared.

"I did what I thought was right," he whined. "He's nuthin' but a durned Yankee."

"No matter if he is Mephistopheles himself. If he has General Bragg's pass you must not detain him. Now, my friend, what is your errand in our lines?"

"I want to see General Price," said Tom, eagerly. "Will you take me to him at once?"

"I will certainly do so! Dismount, men! We will march to headquarters! You may fall in, stranger."

Tom at once complied. With the Confederate cavalrymen he marched rapidly into the encampment. In due time the cavalry reached their quarters. Then Captain Spencer, for that was the young officer's name, said:

"Now, my friend, I will take you to see General Price. I have an errand thither myself."

Tom followed Captain Spencer. The latter made inquiry:

"You spoke of Nell Prentiss. I knew her in Richmond. I am a friend of her brother's. Where is she now?"

"A prisoner in Corinth," replied Tom.

Spencer started as if shot.

"In the hands of the Yankees?"

"Yes."

"That is bad! Do they know her real occupation?"

"They do!"

"They will not be so base as to hang her, will they? We don't know what to expect from the Yankees."

"By no means," said Tom, easily. "They're just as square as you people. They don't hang women."

Spencer gave Tom a sharp glance.

"Ah!" he exclaimed. "I think I see it now. You are a Yankee yourself?"

"I am," replied Tom, "and I'm proud of it!"

"To be sure. Well, my Yankee friend, it is not for me to sit upon your case. If you came here in Miss Prentiss' behalf, you will be cordially treated. Here we are!"

A few moments elapsed before they were admitted to the presence of General Price. Tom at once faced the Confederate general.

"I have a message for you from Nell Prentiss," he said. "She is in Corinth jail. I have ventured into your lines to bring it, for she is the sweetheart of our captain, and that makes her right in my eyes, even if she is a Confederate spy!"

General Price's face had been cold and stern. But now it relaxed, and he smiled.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"I am Corporal Tom Peters, of the Fairdale Blues."

"Oho! I have heard of this company of Blues," said General Price; "they are a lively company of boys, and if I had this captain in my hands I'd hang him for the damage he did us at Iuka!"

"All right," said Tom, bluntly. "You'll never get him. If you want to vent your spite on his corporal, here I am."

Price knit his brows.

"You speak boldly," he said.

"Well, that is a Yankee way."

"I don't believe you are so bad as you look."

"I hope not," rejoined Tom. And then everybody laughed. General Price's humor seemed to change.

He took the letter pencilled by Nell Prentiss in the Corinth jail, and read it. As he did so, the lines of his face seemed to soften.

"So this is some of the clever work of that Steve Farwell," he said, with a shrug. "If I had him here I'd hang him. I am a foe to the Union, and I'd gladly hang your captain myself, but I can't see fair play or justice thwarted. Listen, Corporal Peters, I shall write a letter to General Grant, explaining all. I will give him a bit of evidence to prove that this Farwell is as treacherous to the Union side as he is to ours. The letter he claims I sent to Captain Clark is a forgery. When does your court-martial sit?"

"At ten o'clock."

General Price glanced at his watch and gave a start. His voice rose like a clarion as he called out:

"Captain Spencer, secure the best horse you can find for Corporal Peters. Detail six of your men to escort him beyond our lines at full speed. Do not lose one moment. Sir, it will be necessary for you to ride hard to reach Corinth in time to be present at the court-martial."

Tom Peters saluted promptly.

"General, I'm a demon in the saddle," he replied. "Just give me your autograph and I'm off."

"All right."

Price seated himself at his table, and his pen worked rapidly. He signed and sealed the note to General Grant. He placed it in Tom's hand.

"I wish we had a few men like you in our service," he said, tapping Tom on the shoulder. "I hope you will get there on time."

"Thank you, General Price," replied the fat little corporal. "We may meet again. You're a square man. Good-by!"

In another moment Tom was vaulting into his saddle. With his cavalry escort he dashed past the picket guards and out upon the Corinth road. The guard left him here, and the young corporal sat forward hard in his saddle to ride.

He was riding for the honor and life of his young captain, and he did not spare whip nor spur.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE COURT-MARTIAL.

Second Lieutenant Walter Gray, of the Fairdale Blues, paced nervously up and down before the entrance of the Corinth jail. He cast an anxious but almost hopeless gaze at times down the street.

He was looking for a familiar fat figure to heave into view, and to bring the assurance that the proper evidence had been secured to clear Jack Clark.

Already the members of the court-martial had entered the building, which also held the county court-room. At the door stood two armed guards who crossed their bayonets and barred the passage of any other than the members of the court.

It was an impressive scene, even from the view of those outside. The great barred windows were all that the Blues and their sympathizers could see, ostensibly. But in the mind of each the court-room and its occupants seemed clear.

Jack and Hal, in their cells, heard the prison clock strike ten. Even as the last peal of the bell rang out, the door of the guard-room opened.

A corporal and guard appeared, with the jail marshal. The guard stood in line before the door.

The marshal opened the door of Jack's cell, and said:

"Captain Clark, come out!"

Jack obeyed the command. He was motioned to fall in between the guards. Hal was also brought from his cell.

Then, with the bayonets at their backs, the prisoners were marched down the long corridor to the court-room. The door opened, and they passed in.

The scene was an impressive one. The morning sun glinted its rays through the barred windows. At one end of the room was a dais, on which was a long table.

Behind this sat General Fulton, grave and stern. Beside him was General Smith. Colonel Fenderson and a jury of his fellow officers sat at the left.

At one side stood Steve Farwell, the scout. Guards were placed about the room. No possible attempt at escape could be made.

Jack, in advance, was halted in the center of the room. A guard stood on each side of him.

Behind him stood Hal. For a moment they stood there facing the grim tribunal which was to either find them innocent or send them to their death within the hour.

A trial for life in an ordinary court-room is impressive enough. But it cannot, in any respect, class with a military tribunal.

There is an element of disgrace which adds horror to the court-martial. In the present case there was not one occupant of the room who was not pale, save Farwell.

The scout's face was red and swollen with triumph. He believed that his hour of vengeance had come.

General Fulton opened the court in the regular manner. Then the trial opened. General Fulton began first by catechising Jack.

"Captain Clark," said the general, as he consulted his notes, "on Tuesday of this week, after dark, you walked beyond the lines of this army, did you not?"

"I did, sir," replied Jack.

"Did you meet anyone, at or about the hour of ten o'clock at a certain log bridge which crosses a creek?"

"I did not."

There was a pause while the court made notes.

"You deny meeting a Confederate officer there and receiving from him a letter purporting to have been written to you by General Price of the Confederate army?"

"I do."

"You will not deny that this letter was later found upon your person?"

"It was."

"How do you account for its being in your possession?"

"I have no way to account for it other than the hypothesis that some foe and conspirator stole into my tent when I was out and placed it in the pocket of my undress uniform. I had not worn this coat until the day that I was summoned to meet General Grant when this man Farwell accused me of having the letter."

Farwell, who stood beside the General's table, only smiled. Notes were taken, and General Fulton asked:

"You can think of no other way of the letter coming into your possession?"

"No other way."

"Can you absolutely assert, to your knowledge, that the letter was placed there by some one else?"

"It must have been placed there by some one other than myself."

"You cannot name that party?"

"Yes, I think I could. But I cannot prove it."

"Do you deny having had any intercourse with General Price or his agents, or any representatives of the Confederacy in any way or manner?"

"Only on the battlefield, fighting to the death," replied Jack.

There was a stir among the officers, and even the guards looked as if they would like to cheer. Jack Clark made a handsome picture as he stood there with the light of the morning sun full upon his handsome, noble face. It would seem as if all Nature would rise against the crime of marching this loyal young officer to the dead line to be shot.

Farwell bit his lip, and an angry gleam glittered in his eyes. But General Fulton went on:

"You were sent by General Grant to carry important dispatches to Rosecrans, at Tusculumbia, were you not?"

"I was."

"On the way a presumed dispatch from General Grant overtook you, ordering you to remain at Little Sycamore?"

"It did."

"You believed this dispatch genuine?"

"I did."

"Did you examine it closely?"

"I confess I did not. I never dreamed of such a trick."

"Don't you think if you had done so, you would have discovered that it was a forgery?"

"I think I would."

"You know that your failure to execute General Grant's order was the cause of the miscarrying of his plans and the loss of many lives?"

"I am deeply conscious of that. But I acted strictly by my orders, as I believed."

"Whom do you suspect of having sent you the dispatch?"

"I cannot name the person, for I cannot prove it."

"What do you think was the motive?"

"That of revenge for a fancied slight. I can ascribe no other motive."

"This is your best defense?"

"May I speak a few words in my defense?" asked Jack.

"You may."

"The Fairdale Blues were mustered in at Washington when the Capital was in deadly danger and the interests of our country hung in the balance. Our presence there, with others who hastened to the front at the first call to arms, prevented its capture and saved untold treasures to the nation. Next we fought at Bull Run, where we covered that awful retreat in our bravest way. Next we participated with McClellan in battles in Virginia, and won the personal praise and esteem of President Lincoln. At Fort Henry and Donelson, at Pittsburg Landing and at Shiloh we have carried our flag always in the van of the army. We have shunned no danger, we have evaded no duty, we have stood ready to sacrifice our lives on the instant for our country and our God. Not until this moment has the least breath of suspicion or of calumny been turned upon us. With this glorious record back of us, with our training and our ideals, do you, gentlemen, think it possible that we would, at this late hour, stoop to a crime, the blackest and vilest on earth? Our lives, mine and that of my brave lieutenant here, you may take at your will—we stand ready to yield them up, but we ask that we may give them in a forlorn hope or a last resort; where our names may be coupled with honor, rather than the obloquy and odious disgrace of the fate of spies. Let us die fighting for the old flag, with our last gaze upon the stars and the stripes, which represent the best and the freest and noblest government under the skies. Let our young lives be given in this manner, rather than at the hands of our comrades—dying falsely charged as spies. In face of all these things, gentlemen, can you believe us guilty? I can make no other defense."

There was a silence like death in the court-room. Every eye in the court was downcast as Jack finished his appeal. Emotion of the deepest sort stirred all save Farwell.

It was some moments before General Fulton was able to say:

"The conducting of a military court-martial declares that matters of sentiment and personal sympathy must not be considered. Only the bare facts, cold and skeleton-like, can have any bearing and must rule our decisions."

"We recognize the fact that you and your company have performed valorous deeds. Whatever our personal belief in regard to your guilt or innocence must be sternly set aside in favor of cold evidence. No the court must not

allow itself to be swayed or ruled by any other motive than that of stern justice as declared by the evidence. Your defense will be duly considered by this ratio. Farwell, the scout, will now give testimony."

All eyes were turned upon the scout. He drew a breath of relief as General Fulton made his ruling.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE EVIDENCE AGAINST THEM.

Farwell stood, smiling and confident, before the court. General Smith now took up the line of questioning.

"Your name is Stephen Farwell?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Are you a regularly appointed scout in the United States service? Do you hold a commission from the War Department?"

Farwell hesitated, and his face flushed.

"I do not," he replied. "But I serve under orders from General Grant. I have never applied for a commission."

"Your duties take you within the Confederate lines at certain times?"

"Yes, when I can go there with safety."

"Have you never performed scout service for Generals Beauregard, or Bragg, or Price?"

"Why, no," replied Farwell. "Only as a bluff, perhaps, to deceive them."

"Did you not hold a scout's commission at one time in their service, approved and signed by General Lee?"

Farwell grew a sickly yellow. He hesitated and stammered:

"Why—it was all in line with my regular game of getting inside facts," he said. "I made them think that I was scouting for them, so that I could get inside. See?"

"I see!" said General Smith, quietly. "Now, you know Captain Clark well, don't you?"

"Why, yes."

"Very good. Have you kindly feelings towards him?"

"More than he has towards me."

"You admit that there is not a friendly feeling between you?"

"Why, yes, I do."

"What is your opinion of Captain Clark?"

"He is a spy and a traitor!" denounced Farwell, savagely.

Unable to control himself longer, Jack started forward, but was restrained by the guard.

"That is false, and you know it, Steve Farwell!" he cried.

But General Smith seemed not to heed the outbreak. He went on:

"Last Tuesday evening were you by the log bridge on the Tupelo road, about the hour of ten?"

Farwell's eye glittered.

"I was," he declared.

"What did you see there?"

"I saw Captain Clark. I wondered what he was doing beyond the picket line, so I took the liberty to follow him. To my surprise I saw him meet another man by the log bridge. The latter was in the uniform of a Confederate officer. I saw him give Clark a letter. It satisfied me that he was playing the part of a traitor. That letter General Grant found on his person the next day. It was from General Price."

A dead silence fell upon the court-room. It was appalling in its density. All eyes were fixed upon the doomed young officer.

Whatever they might think of his innocence, here was prima facie evidence, full and incontrovertible. General Smith's face seemed to grow haggard.

"That is sufficient, Farwell," he said. "You may sit down."

The scout did so. General Fulton now spoke:

"Lieutenant Martin, step forward."

Jack Clark drew a deep breath. He knew that his case was closed. He had nothing more to say in defense. The evidence was preponderating against him. He had no way to disprove it.

He saw that these stern generals could find but one ruling from the stern standpoint of the evidence. They must rule him guilty.

A sickening sense of horror came over Jack. It was not death of which he was afraid.

He saw the file of soldiers proceeding him to the parade ground. He saw the empty grave. Already he felt them placing the fatal bandage across his eyes, and the lieutenant of the death guards' voice sounded in his ears:

"Attention! Ready! Aim!"

He saw the guard filing away! He could read the army rolls and see his own name underlined in black:

"Shot as a spy and traitor!"

"Lieutenant Martin," said General Fulton, in a low tone, "did you pass beyond the picket line on the Ripley Road?"

"I did sir," replied Hal.

"Is there not a small cabin beside the road inhabited by colored people?"

"I believe so."

"Did you enter that cabin?"

"I did."

"Whom did you meet there?"

"The colored woman, Dinah, whom I paid to prepare me a good meal. Also I met a young woman named Nell Prentiss, whom I knew to be a Confederate female spy."

"You admit all this?"

"I do."

"Did you know that she was in the cabin when you entered?"

"No."

"Did she not make herself known to you?"

"She did."

"You deny, then, that you met her there by previous understanding or appointment?"

"I do."

"Still you engaged her in conversation and remained there with her for some time?"

"That is true."

"You knew all the while that she was a female spy?"

"I did."

"Was not this conduct upon your part rather irregular? Was it not your duty to arrest this woman for whom the country has long offered a reward?"

"General," said Hal, "in the days before this war came to curse our land, Nell Prentiss was a school friend of mine. Naturally, we greeted each other as old friends. Nominally we were foes. I presume that I should have effected her arrest later, but suddenly that dark scoundrel over there burst in upon us with an armed guard."

Farwell laughed scornfully. General Fulton rapped on the table.

"It is necessary to preserve the dignity of this court," he said. "Now, Martin, did you discuss with this female spy matter pertaining to the defenses of Corinth?"

"No, sir."

"That is all," said General Fulton.

General Smith now turned his gaze upon Farwell. He said, coldly:

"You may stand up."

The scout obeyed. Complete triumph shone in his face. It was plain that he believed his game won.

"Farwell," said General Smith, "were you present on the Ripley Road, night before last, and saw Martin enter the cabin of Dinah the negress?"

"I was."

"Did it impress you as odd?"

"It did."

"What was the result?"

"I became so interested that I went up to the cabin window and looked in. I saw Nell Prentiss appear. She sat down at a table with Martin."

"What next?"

"They held conversation."

"Could you hear what they said?"

"Yes. They discussed the plans of the Corinth defenses, and other matters relating to our camp."

"That is a falsehood!" cried Hal.

"Silence!" said General Smith. He was about to ask Farwell another question. But just then the door of the court-room swung open.

The guards started forward, but instantly halted and came to attention. Every officer of the court was upon his feet.

On the threshold stood General Grant. In one corner of his mouth was the inevitable cigar.

"Well, gentlemen," he asked, "are the proceedings of the court finished?"

"The evidence is all in, general," said General Smith. "We have made no findings as yet."

"The weight of the evidence is against-the prisoners, I assume?"

"It is."

"At this moment, in your best opinion, you will have to find them guilty. I can see it in your faces. If it is not too late, though, I would like to offer some more evidence in the prisoners' favor."

"Indeed, general, we shall be most happy to consider it," declared General Smith.

General Grant stepped into the room. Behind him appeared two persons, Corporal Tom Peters, bedraggled and hot, and Nell Prentiss, radiant and happy.

The effect of this upon Jack and Hal can hardly be told in words. For a moment they stood spellbound. Then the startling conviction dawned upon them that matters had taken a turn in their favor.

The moment Tom saw his young captain he gave an exclamation and started forward. But General Grant interposed, and said:

"Not yet, corporal! General Smith, kindly take this young man's evidence."

"I shall be pleased," said General Smith. "Please stand forward! What is your name?"

"Tom Peters, corporal of the Fairdale Blues," was the little corporal's reply.

"Indeed! What do you know about this case?"

"I know that my captain is not guilty of the charge against him," said Tom, glaring at Farwell.

"Ah! What evidence can you give in support of your claim?"

"This!" said Tom, producing the letter of General Price to General Grant. "It will tell you that General Price never wrote a letter to Captain Clark. That he never saw him, and that the letter found in Captain Clark's pocket was a forgery, and yonder stands the forger, whom we have evidence given us by General Price to convict as a spy and traitor himself!"

And Tom pointed an accusing finger at Farwell.

CHAPTER XV.

WHICH ENDS THE STORY.

It is impossible to depict the expression upon Farwell's face as this thrilling denunciation was hurled at him.

Every vestige of color left it. He stood like a wax statue, staring in abject fear and dismay at his accuser. His lips moved automatically:

"It is a lie."

It was of no use to restrain any in the court-room after that. General Smith did not even take the trouble to read General Price's letter.

There was no further formality. The court in a body arose, and General Fulton called out:

"The court rules that the evidence will not hold, and the prisoners are honorably discharged!"

Then Jack turned to grasp the hands of those who now crowded about him, and Hal as well, to offer congratulations.

"We knew you weren't guilty," said General Fulton, "and it would have been the most sorrowful act of my life to have condemned you!"

"They would never have been shot," said General Grant, as he laid a reprieve, fully made out, on the table. "No man, loyal to our cause, shall go to his death, unless I am convinced that he is a traitor."

Nell had not been called upon to testify. She held out her hand to Jack, while tears of joy swam in her eyes.

"It is all I desire," she said. "You are cleared. I care not what becomes of me!"

Jack led her up to General Grant.

"General," he said, "I have never before asked a favor of you. I will agree to never ask another. Set this young woman free?"

General Grant's face never changed a line.

"She is the worst of female spies," he said. "I will parole her."

"I will accept no parole," said Nell, defiantly. "I am loyal to the Confederacy, and I will stand by it until I die!"

"Then we shall have to hang you," said General Grant, quietly.

"You may do so. I am not afraid to die in our glorious cause!"

"Nell!" exclaimed Jack, "don't be unreasonable. You cannot blame General Grant. He is not disposed to be harsh."

There was a twinkle in the general's eye.

"Hanging a woman is a very ordinary matter in our lines," he said. "In fact, it is a measure of self-preservation. Only think what would happen if all the women in the country turned upon us."

"I am willing to be an example," said Nell. "Now I don't believe you are serious. You will not even hang me."

"Are you disappointed?" asked General Grant. "I don't like to refuse you."

"Now you are making sport of me."

"Miss Prentiss," said General Grant, in a serious tone, "the calling you have adopted is a very foolish and dangerous one for one of your sex. Neither is it wholly dignified. The idea of gloriously dying for your country reads well, but it is a lamentable failure in practice. Fighting is business, making war is business. Business principles are at the bottom of the present strife, though some people choose to cover them with the cloak of sentiment.

"You are a very nice young woman, but take the advice of a brutal fighting man, and go back to your home, and the peaceful pursuits so graceful and appropriate to woman-kind. It will serve you and the country much better. Sergeant, procure a guard and escort this woman beyond

our lines. I am going to leave it to her good sense and discretion to adopt another calling."

General Grant bowed low, and walked from the room. For a moment Nell Prentiss stood biting her lip in a half-vexed way.

"No," she said; "I believe I would rather be a prisoner."

But Jack said in an undertone:

"Good-by, Nell! Remember that the war will soon be over."

The young girl's eyes dropped before his ardent gaze. The guard had already formed before her. With bowed head she followed it out of the room.

Steve Farwell, raving and fuming, had been led away by the guard. So far as he was concerned, Jack had no more to fear.

For the treacherous scout was himself given a short trial and sentenced to death. He was shot a few days later by General Grant's order.

Jack and Hal went back to the arms of their comrades. It was a joyful meeting.

Those were dark hours indeed when Jack and Hal had stood under the ban of the deadly court-martial.

But right had triumphed, their honor had been vindicated, and they were happy. The report of the matter spread through the whole army.

And wherever the two young officers went they were cheered to the echo. It was a happy hour for them.

Jack thought often of Nell, and wondered greatly where she had gone, and if she had really abandoned her calling.

There was a strange tugging at his heart-strings when her face arose before him, but he knew that stern duty must come first.

"After the war is over!"

This became the burden of many a song on Northern and Southern lips as well.

The home and the fireside and the loved ones seemed indeed far away. To many they were never seen again.

But great events were now looming up in the future.

General Grant went north to Jackson, leaving Rosecrans in command at Corinth.

On the second of October Van Dorn moved from Chewalla towards Corinth. It was evident that a concerted attack upon the Union stronghold was about to be made.

In preparation for this attack, Rosecrans drew his forces into the defenses of Corinth. These were now of a most effective kind.

Beauregard had originally fortified Corinth. Halleck had constructed works inside these, and Grant had enlarged and improved them.

So that, though greatly outnumbered by the Confederates, they stood a good chance to hold their ground. How they did this must be told in a future story.

The Blues were more than enthusiastic over the vindication of their young captain and his lieutenant. As soon as General Rosecrans entered Corinth, he sent for Jack Clark.

"Well, Captain Clark," he said, in a most gracious way, "I am glad to know that you are to remain under my command in Corinth."

"The pleasure is mutual, general."

"I feared that General Grant might draw some of my best troops north to defend Jackson."

"I hardly think he would do that. The enemy are certainly going to attack Corinth, General Rosecrans."

"I believe you, Clark. Now I want to attach you and your company to my special command."

"We shall be much pleased."

"I know that you are good on scouting service, and that is something this army sorely needs."

"We stand ready to go out whenever you choose to send us."

"Very well. Let us consult this map. At the present moment Van Dorn is north of us. Price is advancing more from the west, along the Mobile and Ohio Railroad."

"Yes, that is true."

"We might interpose a column to draw an attack on the north. I believe that they think we are weakest in that quarter. But they will be surprised. That is our strongest point."

"So I believe."

"Then I shall be glad if you and your company will move out far enough to reconnoiter that ground, extending to Chewalla. At the first sign of the enemy's approach, fall back and let me know."

Jack hastened away with these orders. In a very brief time the Blues were far out beyond the northern line of defenses. An hour's sharp work convinced Jack that the attack was close at hand.

He returned hastily and advised General Rosecrans of this fact. At once the Union garrison proceeded to make every preparation to meet the foe.

It was not long before the advanced line of pickets were driven in. The fight began in a series of desultory skirmishes.

But as the Confederate columns now swept into view, the artillery opened, and the great battle was on.

Its results, and what part the Blues took in it, must be reserved for another story.

THE END.

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